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Arise! Awake! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

THUS SPOKE SHRI KRISHNA

Love of God

When Krishna found time to give his attention to the *gopis* in private, He found their minds absorbed in Him, a state of oneness through love which even Yogis cannot easily achieve. He said with a smile:

“Beloved ones, I had to leave you and Vraja for the good of all. I hope you have not forgotten Me or accused Me of ingratitude. It is the Supreme Providence who brings people together and who separates them in His own inscrutable wisdom. You have to be congratulated, dear friends, for this love of yours, which will lead you directly to the realisation of My true nature and to immortality. I am the beginning and end of all things, their inner and outer being, their material elements as well as the Self which dwells in and enjoys them.”

Hearing this, the *gopis* discarded their body-sense and merged in the Supreme Self, praising the Lord for His infinite wisdom, which is also infinite love, which liberates from the bondages of worldly existence.

Worshipping Holy Persons

At that moment a great concourse of ancient Rishis appeared on the scene—

Vyasa, Narada, Vishwamitra, Chyavana, Bharadwaja, Vasishtha, Brihaspati, the four Kumara celibates and many others. All the kings with Krishna rose to receive them, offered them seats, garlands and water to wash their feet. Then the Lord spoke:

“Your visit, O ancient Masters of yoga, has conferred on us great blessings. People of poor penance, who confine God to an image are not given the privilege of worshipping you. Water does not purify nor images made of earth and stone represent deities till after a long recourse to them, whereas a single sight or touch of a holy man achieves instant purification. The worship of the gods not only does not wash away sins but, on the contrary, promotes the sense of duality (the worshipper and the worshipped), whereas the service of the wise, be it only for a short time, wipes out all sins. He who looks upon his body, which consists of bile, wind and phlegm as himself, and those who are connected with it as his own, and images of stone and wood as worthy of worship, and water rather than holy men as purifier of sins, is verily a donkey among cows.”

—Compiled from *Shrimad Bhagavatam* (LXXXII to LXXXIV).

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL is on the relation of brain, mind and consciousness, according to Indian philosophical systems of Samkhya, Vedanta and Raja-yoga. on the subject, is contributed by Swami Brahmeshananda of Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama (Hospital) at Varanasi.

HEMCHANDRA GHOSH : THE INDIAN REVOLUTIONARY AND RAMAKRISHNA-VIVEKANANDA MOVEMENT is a historic document prepared by the author who interviewed the veteran revolutionary number of times. The article narrates the deep faith and respect of the nationalists and revolutionaries of the pre-independence era in the life and message of Shri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda. Swami Purnatmananda is the Jt. Editor of *Udbodhan*, the Bengali monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order.

CONFLICTS BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION THEN AND NOW, a scholarly interpretation

BUDDHIST AND HINDU TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE is a very scholarly write up on the subject by Shri Venkat Ramana Reddy, former Addl. Secretary, Town Planning, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh. Shri Reddy is a well-known authority on Indian architecture, who represented India in International forums, and who is currently the chief architect in the renovation of Kedar and Badri Temples in the Himalayas.

KANHOPATRA: A DEVOTEE OF KRISHNA is an inspiring life-sketch of the woman-saint of Maharashtra. It is by Swami Vipashananda of Ramakrishna Mission, Bombay.

BRAIN, MIND AND CONSCIOUSNESS IN YOGA-VEDANTA

(EDITORIAL)

Relation between brain, mind, and consciousness or the Self in human being, is an important matter of thought and rationalisation in different systems of Indian philosophy. Two chief streams of Indian philosophical thinking, the Samkhya and the Vedanta made extensive investigations, experiments, spiritual explorations, and finally rational statements on the theme of mind-brain-consciousness relation.

Physical sciences of today belong to that branch of knowledge which attempts to study, investigate and control the Cosmic mass or energy that manifests in various forms of matter and energy, like electricity, magnetism, nuclear energy etc. Ages ago Indians developed another branch of know-

ledge which tried to study, investigate and control the various mental and psychic forces and various levels of consciousness, through mental means. This is the science of Raja Yoga.

The Raja Yoga, the science of mind, is a more difficult science than the physical sciences. In physical sciences, the scientists gather data from outside and gain knowledge. In Raja-Yoga the mind is the object of study and the investigator is, again, the introspective mind of the yogi. There is no common data in this mental world, which are always in a state of continuous movement and change. One can hold fast to a microscope and look for a long time at a slide or some specimens for investigation.

In the mental world it is extremely difficult to hold fast to a single mental image even for a few seconds. How is it possible then to study the mind? Deep, deep within is the Atman, the eternal Self, the unchanging One, says the Vedanta. The science of Raja Yoga asks us to stand on this Self, the eternal unchangeable Reality within us and then look at the whirling flux of mind. Says Vivekananda,

"Turn the mind inward and become united to that; and from that point of stability, the gyrations of the mind can be watched and facts observed which are to be found in all persons."¹

What to do if it is not possible to stand on the Self at the very beginning? Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali say that one can try to concentrate on a God-like person or practise devotion to God, prayers and worship, or accept a higher level of intelligence. After being established in such a concentration, or on such a higher level of intelligence (Buddhi), one can slowly look at the gyrations of the mind, know their deeper causes hidden in the layers of the unconscious mind, and slowly root out those causes by systematic practice of discrimination and concentration. Says Vivekananda,

"To control the mind, you must go deep down into the sub-conscious mind, classify and arrange into an order all the different impressions, thoughts etc. stored up there, and control them. This is the first step. By the control of the sub-conscious mind, you get control over the conscious."²

This science of the psychic world is the most difficult of all the sciences. That is why in history we have seen hundreds of scientists, poets, or artists, but only a handful of true yogis like Christ, Buddha, Krishna or Ramakrishna.

The Samkhya philosophy, which is the oldest of all Indian philosophical systems, is based on the gradual evolution of life and creation. It takes a more hair-splitting look at this subject of brain-mind-consciousness relation. According to Samkhya, everything that we see and know is created by the combination of two Eternal factors—Purusha and Prakriti. Both at the Individual and the Cosmic level, everything is created out of this combination. What is Purusha? It is the ultimate cause of all changes in the universe. It is neither intelligence, nor will, nor ego, nor objects of senses. It is the cause of all of these which constitute Prakriti. The Purusha is the only sentient Reality and pure witness, but because of its presence, Prakriti becomes active, dynamic, and sentient. Prakriti is not nature, or the physical body or the sense-bound world of material universe. In the truest sense, it is the ultimate causal state of things, which is the unmanifested condition of all effects that evolve into the universe of matter and life. When the universe gets destroyed it goes back to that causal state which is Prakriti in the true sense. Today's astrophysics has proved that when an universe collapses due to the fall of energy, it dwindles down to a 'blackhole', and then to the "point of singularity", or "the event horizon" where matter and energy remain undistinguished, where time and space cease to function, and exist only in their causal form. From this 'point of singularity', explode again blackholes, and creation begins.

The first manifestation of this unmanifested Prakriti is 'Mahat', the universal intelligence or the universal mind. Each mind is a part of this universal mind. That is why, each mind is in connection with every other mind or the whole world. That is why thoughts can be communicated between two minds just as water flows from one vessel to the other. That is why thought trans-

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Mayavati Memorial Edn.) Vol VI, p. 31.

2. *Ibid.*, P. 32.

ference is possible, when a thought born in one's mind gets manifested in a similar mind hundreds of miles away. That is why telepathy or mental communication between two similar minds is possible.

From Mahat comes egoism. Egoism is the first sign of an individual's existence. The first fact of a conscious being is his feeling of—I am. Even a child knows that it is. It says "I" am. This egoism is the self-evident proof of one's existence.

From egoism comes the sense organs and the mind. Mind according to Samkhya, is only an instrument like eye or ear for the Eternal witness Purusha to see, create and enjoy the Prakriti. Says Vivekananda,

Who is the seer? The Self of man, the Purusha. What is the seen? The whole of nature beginning with the mind, down to gross matter. All pleasure and pain arose from the junction between this Purusha and the mind.

The seer is really the Self, the pure one, the ever holy. And what are the instruments? The Chitta or mind-stuff, the Buddhi or determinative faculty, the Manas or mind, and the Indriyas or sense-organs. These are the instruments for him to see the external world, and the identification of the Self with the instruments is what is called the ignorance of egoism. We say, "I am the mind", "I am thought", "I am angry", or "I am happy". How we can be angry and how can we hate? We should identify ourselves with the Self that cannot change.³

Egoism evolves into two varieties: (1) The internal sense organs and the mind, and (2) the *tanmatras*, the fine imperceptible particles of matter which combine in various ways to produce all elements. These *tanmatras* strike our sense organs of perception and create sensations. Thus in Samkhya matter and mind have the same origin. That is why matter is only mind concretised, and mind is matter refined. Vivekananda Says,

Modern physiologists tell us that the eyes are not the organ of vision, but that the organ is in

one of the nerve centres of the brain, and so with all the senses; they also tell us that these centres are formed of the same material as the brain itself. The Samkhyas also tell us the same thing. The former is a statement on the physical side, and the latter on the psychological side; yet both are the same.⁴

In Samkhya, Purusha is infinite and omnipresent but they are innumerable in numbers. The Vedanta says infinity cannot be two. So Purusha or the Self is only one. It is one undivided, all-pervading Consciousness. In Samkhya it is the Mahat, the Cosmic mind combined with ego which is the mediator between the Eternal witness Purusha and the functions of the Physical Body of an individual being.

Both in Vedanta and Samkhya, mind is treated as the sixth inner organ, the other five being the inner-organs of sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch. Mind is far below the Self which is of the nature of pure consciousness. It is an object perceived by Self or eternal consciousness within a being.

How are objects perceived by us? The Samkhya explains in the following way.

First, there are the external sense organs like eye and ear. Then there are the corresponding internal organs, the internal brain centres which receive the impressions made on the eye or ear by any sight or sound. These brain centres present the impressions to the determinative faculty or Buddhi which reacts to these impressions. And this reaction is born from the idea of egoism in everyone of us. An egoless saint who is established in the Eternal unchanging Self within does not react to insults, but a common man does. It is the ego which reacts. Then this mixture of action and reaction is presented to the Purusha, the real Self, who perceives an object in this mixture. The external sense organs (Indriyas) together with the mind (Manas), the determinative

3. Ibid., Vol I, Pp. 238, 248.

4. Ibid., P. 135.

faculty (Buddhi), and egoism (Ahamkara), form the group called the Antahkarana (the internal instrument). All these are but various processes or waves in the mindstuff, called Chitta. The waves of thought in the Chitta or mind-stuff are called Vrittis (literally "whirlpool"). Waves of countless thoughts, ideas, and emotions are continually rising and falling in Chitta or mind-stuff which is like a lake.⁵

"Egoism, intelligence and mind have common basis, the Chitta or the mind-stuff, out of which they are all manufactured. The mind-stuff takes in the forces of nature, and projects them as thought."

What is thought? According to Vivekananda, thought is a force, as is gravitation or repulsion. From the infinite storehouse of energy in nature, the instrument called Chitta takes hold of some amount of energy, absorbs it and sends it out as thought. Energy is supplied to us through food, and out of that food the body obtains the power of physical motion, etc. The finer, non-physical forces, are thrown out in what we call thought.⁶

What is the special function of the mind-stuff of human beings? The only speciality is that human mind-stuff can be led and guided by a higher intelligence or Buddhi to the highest state of Self-Realisation, while in animals that is not possible. Although the Chitta or mind-stuff is in every animal, from the lowest to the highest, it is only in the human beings that we find it evolving as the intellect. Until the mind-stuff can take the form of intellect it is not possible for one to control the waves of thoughts and emotions storming our psyche, calm them, and thus liberate the soul from the slavery of desires. "Immediate salvation is impossible for the cow, or the dog, although they have mind, because their Chitta cannot as

yet take that form which we call intellect, says Vivekananda.⁷

Drig Drishya Viveka, one of the gems of Vedanta philosophy, explains the Vedantic idea on the subject of body-mind-consciousness relation:

That the mind has undergone all these changes is known to all. Because of its changeable nature, the mind is an object of perception and consciousness is the perceiver. This is because all these changes are perceived by consciousness. Consciousness perceives all these states because it is a unity.

In the opinion of the wise, the identity of the reflection (of consciousness) and of ego is like the identity of the fire and the (heated) iron ball. The body having been identified with the ego (which has already identified itself with the reflection of consciousness) passes for a conscious entity.

In the state of deep sleep, when (the thought of) ego disappears the body also becomes unconscious. The state in which there is the half manifestation of the ego is called the dream state and the full manifestation of the ego is the state of waking.

The inner organ (Mind) which in itself is but a modification, identifying itself with the reflection of consciousness, imagines (various) ideas in the dream. And the same inner organ or mind (identifying itself with the body) imagines objects external to itself in the waking state with respect to the sense-organs. ... The external reality is the seen, the organ of vision is the seer. The organ of vision is the seen, the mind is the seer. The seer is only a projection of mind or intelligence. The Self within is the eternal witness which cannot be seen.

Strangely enough, this Vedantic idea is being supported both theoretically and experimentally in modern quantum physics. The Everette-Wheeler interpretation of Quantum mechanics explained the paradox of Schrodinger wave equation (Known as Schrodinger's Cat), in words which exactly tally with the words of the *Drig Drishya Viveka*. The world of external reality, according to this interpretation, is an obser-

5. *Raja Yoga*: Swami Vivekananda, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta (1982), Pp. 116-117.

6. *Ibid.*, Pp. 116-117.

7. *Ibid.*, P. 119.

ver-created reality. Consciousness, according to Quantum physics, creates the reality outside.

It is Patanjali the yogi-philosopher of ancient India who experimented with mind in all its relations to Nature and Self. It is Patanjali's Aphorisms on yoga, the science of systematically reaching the super-consciousness level of mind, which stand as the supreme document of mind-brain (body)-conscious (Self) relations. Swami Vivekananda, himself an outstanding master of the highest form of meditation, and a philosopher of the highest order, explained the yoga-aphorisms of Patanjali, in this modern age for the rationalists of scientific temper. Vivekananda did not follow any rigid philosophy or creed. He spoke from the height of his own frequent experiences of super consciousness. He explained through yoga-aphorisms of Patanjali, the truth of mind-brain-consciousness relation in his own inimitable way taking necessary help from Vedanta and Samkhya philosophy. These explanations which he gave in the West on both sides of the Atlantic in 1890s, have been recorded in his master-piece, *Raja Yoga*.

How does this mind which is only finer matter and which is only an instrument of Purusha, lead to the realisation of the superconsciousness? Vivekananda explains:

The powers of the mind are like rays of light dissipated; when they are concentrated, they illumine. This is our only means of knowledge.⁸

And the thought-waves in the lake of the mind slowly shape the mind, and in turn shape the body also. Mind is only finer body, and body is only grosser mind. And actions of the mind are primarily carried through the brain. With newer and newer thoughts, new channels open in the brain which in the beginning resists the coming of new impulses, activation of new nerve channels.⁹

The control of the continually rising and falling waves of thoughts and emotion on the lake of mind-stuff or Chitta is the principal aim of this Raja-yoga.

The Chitta, according to Raja-yoga, manifests itself in the following forms: *Scattering, darkening, gathering, one-pointed, and concentrated*.

When the mind is in darkness of stupor and ignorance, it is under *Tamas*. This state is found in brutes and idiots. It only acts to injure and gets shrouded in delusion. No other idea comes into that state of mind. This is *darkening*. Then there is the active state of mind, *Rajas* whose chief motives are power and enjoyment and which expresses itself in intense action. This is *scattering*. Then there is the state called *Sattva*. This is the state of serenity, calmness, in which the restlessness of mind ceases, and the water of the mind-lake becomes calm and clear. It is not inactive, but rather intensely active. Mind then reaches the state of *gathering* its restlessly out-going tendencies. This is the manifestation of power to be calm. In this state of calmness the mind practises spiritual disciplines, and reaches, by degrees, the state of *one-pointedness*. Finally, through this one-pointed state, mind reaches ultimate *concentration*, when it attains the super-conscious level.

The 'great task' of 'practical psychology' is 'to revive the whole man, by making him a master of himself.'¹⁰ How to become a 'master' of the Self? Raja-yoga tells that man *can* and *does* control his unconscious mind which leads him helplessly to perform some kind of actions whether he likes it or not. Every unconscious action of our body-mind was previously repeated by conscious actions, until the action became automatic. In the same process he can reach the super-conscious level by repeating consciously actions and practices which help one attain

8. Ibid., P. 7.

9. Ibid., Pp. 152-153.

10. *Comp. Works*; Vol. II, P. 35.

the super-conscious state. In this way man can analyse, investigate, understand and finally grapple with the finer causes hidden in the unconscious mind and can control his own conscious mind. Slowly from the state of scattering, mind gathers in, and reaches the superconscious. One who can control his own mind can control every other mind, too. Since all minds are inter-related.

This process of Self-mastery can be hastened or intensified. That is what all the spiritual giants in history did.

"We hasten our growth, we hasten our development, and we become perfect even in this life. This is the higher part of our life and the science of the study of mind and its powers has this perfection as its real end," Says Swami Vivekananda.¹¹

The Raja Yoga teaches that the mind itself has a higher state of existence which is beyond reason. This is the superconscious state. When the mind can attain to that higher state, then mystic and universal knowledge, beyond reasoning, comes to man. Metaphysical and transcendental knowledge comes to man. Just as instinct develops into reason, reason similarly matures into the transcendental, supra-rational consciousness; therefore, not one of the states contradicts the other. Vivekananda says:

Real inspiration never contradicts reason, but fulfils it.... Kant has proved beyond all doubt that we cannot penetrate beyond the tremendous dead wall called reason. But that is the very first idea upon which all Indian thought takes its stand, and dares to seek, and succeeds in finding something higher than reason.¹²

Vivekananda interprets this age-old Indian idea of the higher level of superconscious state which all human beings can attain:

The mind can exist on a still higher plane, the super-conscious. When the mind has attained to that state, which is called Samadhi—perfect concentration, super-consciousness—it goes beyond the limits of reason, comes face to face with facts which no instinct or reason can ever know. All manipulations of the subtle forces of the body, the different manifestations of Prana, if trained, give a push to the mind, help it to go up higher, and become super-conscious, from where it acts.¹³

It is at super-conscious level that man feels himself identified with the Self within which is also the all-pervading Consciousness. Vivekananda explains:

If it is happiness to enjoy the consciousness of this small body, it must be greater happiness to enjoy the consciousness of two bodies, the measure of happiness increasing with the consciousness of an increasing number of bodies, the aim, the ultimate of happiness being reached when it would become a universal consciousness.¹⁴

Standing at this height of the universal consciousness, the Self within, which is of the nature of pure undivided consciousness, Shankaracharya sang,

"I am neither the mind, nor the intellect, nor
the ego, nor the mind-stuff,
I am neither the body, nor the changes in the
body;
I am neither the sense of hearing, taste,
smell or sight,
Neither am I the ether, the earth, the fire,
the air;
I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute,
Bliss Absolute
I am He, I am He (Shivoham, Shivoham)."

Why does human mind, by and large, fail to grasp these higher states of consciousness? It is due to lack of experience and knowledge.

"If we think, just for example's sake, that the mind is like a needle, and the brain substance a

11. Ibid., P. 19.

12. *Raja Yoga*, Pp. 90, 114.

13. *Comp. Works*; Vol. I, P. 150.

14. Ibid., P. 14.

soft lump before it, then each thought that we have makes a street, as it were, in the brain, and this street would close up, but for the grey matter which comes and makes a lining to keep it separate....

But whenever a new subject comes, new channels have to be made, so it is not understood readily. And that is why the brain (it is the brain, and not the people themselves) refuses unconsciously to be acted upon by new ideas. It resists. ... This is the secret of conservatism.¹⁵

This incapacity and resistance of the mind to absorb new ideas resulted in the religious fanaticism with books and creeds throughout history. From time immemorial prophets, or religious leaders have claimed to have heard the 'Divine message' from beyond either through a voice, a god or goddess, a bird, a box, an angel, a burning bush and so on. All their experiences are valid. But in many cases, the seers or their followers failed to explain that all these messages came from their own super-conscious level of mind. The external visions etc. were only symbolic.

We find in studying history, one fact held in common by all the great teachers of religion the world ever had. They all claim to have got their truths from beyond, only many of them did not know where they got them from.... The real fact is that these various men, as it were, stumbled upon this superconscious state.... What does the science of yoga teach? It teaches that they were right in claiming that all this knowledge came to them from beyond reasoning, but that it came from within themselves.¹⁶

Since rational explanations of these superconscious experiences were not given, simple credulous followers of these faiths clung obstinately to their prophets', or sages' symbol as the only true symbol or the prophet's book as the only true book of God's message. Dogmatism crept in and resulted in bloody confrontation between followers of different faiths, each believing

in a different symbol and a different book of revelation. The rational part of religion did not develop in most of these cases. Rationalists, therefore, feel frustrated with faiths evading reason. "The super conscious", says Vivekananda, "transcends reason but contradicts it never".

* * * *

In Vedanta the crucial role in higher evolution of mind is taken by intelligence (Buddhi). It is due to the right kind of intelligence that our mind can reach the super-conscious level, the transpersonal experiences, and release and manifest infinite knowledge-power within, attain inner illumination, and achieve the Self-power of a Buddha and a Christ. Despite all wealth and education, when intelligence of an individual is oriented towards negative and self-destructive tendencies like delusion, attachment, inertia, drug-addiction, drinking habit, gambling, or other destructive ways of life, it can make a prince a pauper, or a saintly man a sinner.

That is why in India, children are taught from their childhood the Gayatri Mantra which asks the child to repeat—"Let our intelligence be elevated" (*Dhiyo yo nah prachodayat*). That is why Krishna asked Arjuna, bewildered and terrified in the battle field, to take refuge to right kind of intelligence which would guide his fluctuating and erring mind in right direction and lead him to success. Krishna gave him the message of the Gita, "*Mamanusmara yudhyacha*" (Remember me and fight) or "*Buddhau sharanam anviccha*" (Take refuge in the right kind of intelligence which helps you stand on the Self within). Arjuna, the mighty warrior, followed the higher intelligence awakened in him by Krishna's message. This higher intelligence taught him that the end of all legitimate actions is not the enjoyment of sense-objects, but the knowledge of the Self within, which lifts a man forever from the desires and pulls of sensory plea-

15. *Raja Yoga*, Pp. 152-153.

16. *Ibid.*, Pp. 87-88.

tures. The higher intelligence led his mind not only to worldly success, but also to true devotion to God, and true knowledge of the Self.

The *Katha Upanishad* explains the Self-intelligence- mind-body relation in a striking simile of a chariot ;

Know the Atman to be the master of the chariot, the body chariot, the buddhi (intelligence)—the charioteer, and the mind, the reins.

The senses, they say, are the horses, the objects, the roads. The wise calls the Atman—united with the body, the senses, the mind—the enjoyer.

A man who has discrimination for his charioteer, and holds the reins of the mind firmly,

reaches the end of the road ; and that is the supreme position of Vishnu ; i.e. the all-pervading consciousness.

When intelligence is purified by devotion to God, prayers and worship, spiritual practices, study of holy scriptures, Gospels of godmen, grace, and company of perfected souls, mind is also purified of all negative and Self-destructive tendencies. Pure mind then reflects the pure intelligence which is only a reflection of the Eternal Self within, which is omniscient, omnipresent, all-blissful, and eternal. Shri Ramakrishna used to say :

“*Shuddhaman, Shuddhabuddhi, shuddha-atma ek* (Pure mind, pure intelligence, and pure Self are one)”.

HEMCHANDRA GHOSH—THE INDIAN REVOLUTIONARY AND RAMAKRISHNA- VIVEKANANDA MOVEMENT

SWAMI PURNATMANANDA

“...I have seen Swami Vivekananda. I have touched his feet. I can feel even now the galvanic touch of his palm on my head and my back. Those were indeed the most memorable days of my life when I had the rare fortune of coming near Swamiji (in Dhaka, in 1901). Then and then alone I learnt to love my country and for the first time in my life I came to realise in the core of my heart how poignant could be the agony of thralldom. We went to him with the hope of hearing about religion. But what words of power and strength he poured that day into our ears! At once he unfettered our vision and lighted in our heart an effulgent flame. That flame is still burning. The name of that flame is Vivekananda. The name of that fire is India,—the vast undivided India stretching from the Himalayas to the Cape Comorin. Not only to liberate India from the British domination, but also

to establish her as the brightest luminary amidst the galaxy of the modern civilised nations of the world, to coronate her on her rightful throne of the Queen in that august assemblage, was the task Swamiji entrusted to us, the youth of those days. Most vigorously he himself laid the foundation of that great uplift. Our responsibility was to keep the wheel of that grand movement running. But have we been able to prove ourselves worthy of his expectations ? Have we been able to carry his banner aloft ?”

These impassioned words came from the lips of Hemchandra Ghosh, a proverbial figure of the fiery days of India's struggle for freedom, who passed away on 31st October 1980 at the age of 98. The author, who met him on 26th April, 1978 was overwhelmed by these words. On 26th March 1978, the author paid his first visit to

Hemchandra in his South Calcutta residence. He was then almost on the verge of completing his centenary, "an old man of ninety-five or ninety-six", to quote his own words. He was then probably the only surviving person in India who saw Swami Vivekananda and had intimate talks with him. In a series of five interviews during March-April 1978, the author was amazed to see that even in that old age Hemchandra possessed a surprisingly sharp memory and a perfectly alert mind capable of scanning the current trends in the country, religious as well as secular. His voice was firm and spirited, and his personality powerful. One could not but be moved by the fire and vigour of his being. After the first day of our meeting I said, "You are still so mentally alert! It is unthinkable. It is really a very rare phenomenon in your age!" A smile flickered across the face of the old freedom fighter. "Really?"—He answered, "Then I must feel proud. I have been able to fulfil at least one condition imposed by Swamiji! Swamiji wanted his countrymen to be 'always alert'. But Swamiji meant an alertness in an altogether different sense. Could we become alert in that sense? That is the question".

Hemchandra Ghosh not only saw Swamiji when the latter visited Dhaka in 1901, but had the fortune of coming in his close contact also. Being inspired by Swamiji's words only Hemchandra took the oath of dedicating himself to the service of the country. The author wanted to know the views and impressions of the freedom fighters about Swamiji's influence on the Indian Freedom Movement directly from one whose words would be a most representative voice among those who actually came forward to offer their lives for the country's emancipation. Hemchandra was one of the earliest and the best of freedom fighters.

Hemchandra was the founder and the 'Supreme Commander' of the 'Bengal Volun-

teers', more popularly known by its initials 'B.V.', which was a pioneer revolutionary organisation in Bengal during the late twenties and thirties. One of the closest colleagues of Subhas Chandra Bose in later years, Hemchandra had been a vanguard of the freedom movement in India long before the emergence of Indian politics. He was popularly known as 'Barda' (the eldest brother) to the revolutionaries of his own organisation which spread out its field of influence and action all over Bengal and outside. His spirited actions and elevated character made him a born leader. A terror to the then British rulers, Hemchandra had long records of imprisonment and suffering in the British jails. Countless youths were inspired by his exemplary patriotism and self-sacrifice in those days. He remained a bachelor throughout his life and lived the life of virtually an ascetic till his last day. A scholar described him as 'a living history of a long chapter of the Indian freedom movement'.

Dr. R. C. Majumdar, the doyen of Indian history, told the author in the course of a conversation (dt. 2 September, 1978): "I know from reliable sources that Hemchandra Ghosh, the well-known revolutionary leader, had some positive instrumentality behind Subhas Chandra Bose's disappearance from India in 1941 and that he had secret contacts with I.N.A. too. Sarat Chandra Chatterjee himself once told me, 'Savyasachi of *Pather Dabi* is not just a figment of my imagination. It has got a factual foundation. I collected its materials from the lives of some top terrorist leaders intimately known to me. But I am specially indebted to Hemchandra Ghosh so far as the writing of the novel and more particularly, the portrayal of the character of Savyasachi, are concerned.' Hemchandra Ghosh was then well known as a notable terrorist leader of Bengal. Sarat Chandra spoke highly of his patriotic zeal, organising ability, leadership and individual moral standard. It is therefore not unlikely

that Sarat Chandra wanted to mean by all this that he found in Hemchandra Ghosh in particular his choicest figure in reality, whom he idealised in the character of Savyasachi. There was a time, it may be mentioned incidentally, when the revolutionaries of Bengal would find an idol of their aspiration in Savyasachi and a testament of their faith in *Pather Davi* the inspiring masterpiece of a novel by Sarat Chandra Chatterji, which was proscribed by the British Government in 1927 on charge of incorporating violent ideas of treason." These words coming from the authority of a historian of Dr. R. C. Majumdar's eminence, show what a distinctive place Hemchandra used to occupy as a freedom fighter even before the exploits of 'B.V.' came to be known. In the following pages we present the English translation of only a small portion of what Hemchandra told the author who recorded a full account of all the five interviews with him. These were submitted to him in writing on 2nd May 1978 for his perusal and approval. It was a great pleasure for the author that he not only approved them by putting his signature (dated 6th May 1978), but kindly gave his consent to publish them also. They were serialised in the pages of '*Udbodhan*', the Bengali organ of the Ramakrishna Order, and later on published also as a book by Udbodhan Office. Unfortunately he did not live to see them in print. Hemchandra also gave the author a signed (23rd April 1978) article by him in Bengali on 'Swami Vivekananda and India's struggle for Freedom' on 26th April 1978 in response to a request made to him earlier.

The grand old man went on speaking on Swamiji. Scanning critically the last hundred years with his rare experience of almost a centenarian, he went on triggering off: "I have witnessed the history and the flow of events of a whole century. Perhaps now Swamiji will reject us and choose his band of soldiers from the young generation of the

coming age. We heard from Kamakhya Mitra that Swami Saradananda used to speak in this strain. Kamakhya Mitra told us that he heard Swamiji spelling out in unequivocal terms: 'Before India reaches the fifties of the twentieth century, she will send the Britishers back to England bag and baggage. Then steadily she will rise and establish her glory before the whole world'. Will the dream of Vivekananda remain unfulfilled? Can his mission be unrealised? Strength, inspiration, hope, Swamiji will give us all. Unworthy we are. We have lost them all even though his power was bestowed like a grace on us.

Vivekananda wanted unalloyed, unadulterated and unshrivelled men. He wanted only one hundred such souls, absolutely pure and spotless hundred souls, not more. Alas! we could not satisfy his conditions. Many amongst us came with great promise, but got lost in the long run in the mire of politics and in the whirlpool of petty self-interests and narrowness. They thus mortgaged their souls and became bankrupt and lost for ever. We miserably failed to inculcate in us those specific virtues of a patriot that Swamiji demanded from us. But Vivekananda is not dead. There can be no death for him. He cannot feel relieved until he sees India which was to him his lifeblood, as it were, restored to her proper place with all glory and grandeur. With our own eyes we have seen what a fierce passion he had for India. Oh, what an unfathomable restlessness he had for India! What terrible pangs and agony he bore within for India!

And his anxious agony never went in vain. India then came out of her slumber and found in Swamiji's life and message the signal of light, the war-cry of marching forward and forward. That light will lead us in future also, that war-cry will provide us with strength in our endeavour to make the India of tomorrow. I am a follower of Vivekananda. I am therefore an optimist.

The situation that we see today is not what may be called truly correct. That what is ahead is going to be proved correct. Now we are passing through a transitional chapter. This poses a great challenge—a great trial. Should we look forward to the riches of our home or allow ourselves to be flown away by the winds outside? Now what is needed is to stand firm and erect. And we will get the necessary inspiration and strength in the works of Swamiji. I personally feel that what we are undergoing is the process of churning. Out of this chaos and confusion will come out the healing elixir of life. This is my belief, my conviction”.

In all the interviews Hemchandra was found to be an altogether different man whenever he spoke on Swamiji. His eyes and his whole countenance became aglow with great fervour and delight. Every limb of his age-stricken body beamed with a lustre of virility and manliness. Every time he tried to imagine what enormously powerful Vivekananda, the lion amongst men, was, the past memories stirred unplumbed depths in him. The nonagenarian looked immensely animated and inspired. During one of the conversations I had with him earlier, Hemchandra said: “Swamiji was the embodiment of energy itself. His presence and words used to radiate energy all around. Oh, what exciting and inflaming those words were! His words had the magic power to lift a dead man to life, as it were”. During these moments one was reminded of the eloquent words of Romain Rolland written decades after Swamiji’s death: “His words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his, scattered as they are through the pages of books at thirty years’ distance, without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock. And what shocks, what transports must have been produced when in burning words they issued from the lips of the hero!”

“And I tell you”, Hemchandra said, “it was Swamiji who brought the national awakening, and I think that was the real awakening. Neither Gandhiji nor any other national leader before or after him, but it was Swamiji who first truly gave articulate voice to India’s craving for national awakening. Those who led Indian national movement either during or after Swamiji’s lifetime were all consciously or unconsciously influenced to a very large extent by Swamiji. Behind all radical or moderate leaders like Tilak, Surendranath, Gandhiji, Aurobindo, Bepin Pal, Gokhale, Lajpat Ray, Raja Gopalachari, Rashbehari Bose, Bagha Yatin (Yatindranath Mukherjee), Surya Sen, C. R. Das, Subhas Chandra, Jawaharlal and others and ordinary soldiers like ourselves whoever dreamt of liberating the country, invariably stood Swamiji with his gospel of inspiration and blessings.”

Speaking on Swamiji’s contributions to the development of national awakening, Hemchandra incidentally criticised in a very strong language a famous Indian political leader and quoted remarks of a celebrated modern British historian. At once he gave me the book from his personal collection, wherefrom he quoted and told us the page numbers to verify what he quoted. “Swamiji, it was,” he then said, “who could first realise how far-reaching and deep-rooted conspiracy the British rulers made to subjugate India not only to a political thralldom, but also to a perpetual moral, mental and intellectual slavery, and it was he again who first warned the nation of that grave catastrophe waiting to engulf it.”

Hemchandra’s vision then turned from the Disciple to the Master. He switched over from Vivekananda to Shri Ramakrishna whom, he thought, history has not yet been able to estimate in the proper perspective. “One more thing I like to mention”, slowly he began, “which never drew the serious attention of most of the revolutionaries in

those days. Perhaps we had no leisure or rather I should say, no capacity to think about that. It is this: the central figure of Indian Renaissance is Shri Ramakrishna. I do not know what the historians of today will speak about this. It seems that hardly any historian has given his attention to this fact. That, of course, is not making any proper historical evaluation and assessment. But I firmly believe that when deeper studies on Indian Renaissance will be made in future, the fact that will gradually unfold itself is that at the crest of the huge tidal wave of resurrection ushered in India during the last century, was this man—Shri Ramakrishna. It was he who indirectly regulated this significant chapter of Indian history. Some distinguished personalities who, historically speaking, appeared on the Indian scene prior to his advent, were all but his, to put it more appropriately, 'heralds'. They discharged with unique skill the responsibilities entrusted to them of preparing the soil for sowing the new message, for implanting the new consciousness that he was destined to bring soon after. Herald or announcers appear in the court before the entrance of the king. They indicate and proclaim the coming of the king. I am neither a historian nor a scholar. But slowly I am able to discover the gradual change in the Indian perspective that started taking place during the life-time and since the demise of Shri Ramakrishna. Some fifty or hundred years from now this fact will emerge more clearly. This is my belief. The truth that Shri Ramakrishna was the pivotal force in the rise of India has to be gradually accepted by the scholars of history. And so long it is not recognised, I must say, their history cannot be treated as 'history' worth its name."

My curiosity was further aroused when I saw a cluster of framed photopictures of Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda, Sister Nivedita. C.R. Das, Sarat Chandra Chatter-

jee, Kazi Nazrul Islam and Subhas Chandra Bose, hanging on the walls of his room. The pictures of Sarada Devi, Swamiji, Nivedita and Subhas Chandra were fairly large-sized and that of others, comparatively small. These four were seen in their full figures in well-known postures, and the rest in busts. There were besides two smaller pictures, one of Swamiji and the other of Netaji Subhas Chandra. Photographs of Swamiji and Subhas Chandra were more than one in number. But there was no picture of Shri Ramakrishna in the room, either big or small. The absence of his picture seemed quite unusual to me after being acquainted with Hemchandra's great reverence for him. So far during our conversations I never heard the name of Sarada Devi mentioned by Hemchandra in any connection. Not even an indirect or remote reference he made about her.

The place where the picture of Sarada Devi was hanging on the wall, obviously indicated the highest veneration in which she was held by this great revolutionary. It was hanging right in the centre of the southern wall nearest to the location of his head in bed with the well-known portrait of Sister Nivedita to its left and that of Swamiji to its right. It was the very portrait of Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, which is generally used in temples and private shrines of devotees for worship. In reference to his just mentioned remarks on Shri Ramakrishna I put forward to Hemchandra this question straight: "But excuse me Sir. I am rather curious to know then why Shri Ramakrishna's picture is absent in your room, while there are pictures of so many others and particularly of Sarada Devi, Swamiji and Nivedita?" Hemchandra answered with a soft smile and profound feeling: "Picture of the Master (Hemchandra used the term 'Thakur')? Can you tell me where I should keep him? That is why (touching his chest) I have installed him on the throne

of my heart." Hemchandra then made a salutation with folded hands obviously in respect to Shri Ramakrishna, and continued: "I have no capacity to understand what is he and who is he. This much only I know that he is the creator of Swamiji, the root of all his power. The power that stirred the entire world, the power that broke the stupor of India, the sleeping leviathan, for centuries together—all emanated from him. It is he about whom a man like Vivekananda said that the Master could create in a trice millions of Vivekanandas from just a handful of dust. Now try to understand the profundity of this statement. Can we then fathom who Shri Ramakrishna is? After meeting Swamiji and observing the profound and varied impacts of his life, message, and work, it has been revealed to me that under the banyan tree of Dakshineswar, the seat of the *sadhana* (spiritual practices and penances), Shri Ramakrishna awakened the Kula-kundalini (the coiled serpent power within) not only of Vivekananda, but of the whole nation through Vivekananda. In the Renaissance of India, Ramakrishna is therefore the *Mantrapurusha* (the presiding deity) and Vivekananda is the *Nayaka* (the leader), Ramakrishna is Krishna, the *Yogeshwara* (Lord of Yogas) and Vivekananda is the Arjuna, the *Dhanurdhara* (the archer-warrior). Vivekananda emerged like the expected deity from the great sacrificial fire that Ramakrishna lit at the seat of Shakti at Dakshineswar. Away from the public eye in the cloistered solitude of Dakshineswar, the *Yugavatara* (Incarnation of God for the present age) created, in the guise of an illiterate brahmin priest, bit by bit, the great maker of future India. Therefore, my mind naturally refuses to see that Infinite confined in a photo-frame, Supreme Man who is beyond the utmost limit of human understanding. That is why, I have not kept any picture of Shri Ramakrishna. He remains installed in my head, in my heart, in my thought and consciousness."

Hemchandra continued, "Did not you ask me why I have kept a picture of the Holy Mother? Yes, Mother's picture I have kept although I think it is much more difficult to measure her greatness. For, even the Master himself admitted about her: 'Is she an ordinary woman? She is my Shakti. I am powerful only because of her power'.¹ You see, Swamiji said that the source of his power was the Master who again in his turn said that the source of his power was the Holy Mother. That means, she is the source of the source of Swamiji's power. That is why, Swamiji used to place her above the Master. You all know these things well. Swamiji used to designate her as 'the Living Goddess Durga'. Our brains simply reel to imagine the idealised image of Durga depicted in our scriptures. And the Mother is the Durga in reality, in flesh and blood—'the Living Durga!' To comprehend the glory of the Holy Mother is therefore an unthinkable task. Yet I have kept her picture here right above my head. Do you know why? Because I love the Mother. I do not understand who is my Mother and how great she is. And neither do I want to understand. I only understand she is my Mother and I am satisfied with that."

"Did you know anything about the Holy Mother during your revolutionary days?" I asked Hemchandra. He replied: "No. Nothing worth mentioning. I knew about her later. Of course, I heard her name from my cousin brother who joined the Ramakrishna Mission and was ordained into the vows of sannyasa there. He was known as Swami Mokshananda. He was an initiated disciple of the Holy Mother. In 1910 when I first went to the Belur Math, he was there."

1. According to authentic biographical source the statement is this: "Is she an ordinary woman? She is my Shakti."

—(*Sri Ma Sarada Devi* by Swami Gambhirananda, Udbodhan Office, Calcutta, B.S. 1384., Pp. 127).

All these things I have also said in the article I gave to you today. But I never had the fortune of seeing the Mother in her physical frame.

"I have heard that Aurobindo and Yatin Mukherjee² went to the Holy Mother and received her blessings. I have also heard that on the eve of his departure for Pondicherry, Aurobindo went to the Holy Mother, touched her feet and took leave with her blessings. Two revolutionaries who were convicted in and later acquitted from the Manicktolla Bomb Case, Devavrata Basu and Sachin Sen joined the Ramakrishna Mission and were known as Swami Prajnanda and Swami Chinmayananda respectively. The Holy Mother was very much fond of both of them. Many others who were previously revolutionaries or some way or other connected with the revolutionary movement, joined the Belur Math as monastics. We have heard that the then authorities of the Belur Math were initially hesitant regarding the entry of such boys, particularly of those noted revolutionaries like Devavrata Basu and Sachin Sen, to the Order as monastics. The reason behind this was to avoid the suspicion of the British Government. The Government suspected that the Math had some intimate liaison with the revolutionary movement and hence was rather displeased with the Math. Attempts were also made, it is learnt, to ban the Belur Math on charges of its supposed alliance with the seditious activities. We have heard that it was the Holy Mother who then gave her verdict in favour of accepting those boys in the Order.

Sister Nivedita, although a member of the Math, had close association with the revolutionary movement and she had to leave the Math for that. This formal dissociation was probably inevitable for the

sake of the safety of the Math. But we never heard that the Mother had ever asked the Sister (i.e. Sister Nivedita) to give up her connections with the revolutionary movement. The Holy Mother was held in such an esteem and reverence by the Sister that it would have been definitely impossible for her to continue to be associated with the revolutionary movement had the Holy Mother imposed upon her any prohibitory directive. I heard that after her formally leaving the Ramakrishna Mission the Sister remained till her death an object of great love to the Mother. On enquiry I came to know later from reliable sources that this incident did not leave any shadow upon her relation with Ramakrishna Mission and neither of the Mission with her. Her relation of love, respect and admiration with Swami Brahmananda, Swami Saradananda and other monks remained to exist exactly the same as it was before. It is needless to tell you about this any further because you know all this much better. But I personally hold that apart from her being one of the dearest disciples of Swamiji, the influence of the Mother's special affection for the Sister might have worked behind this factor too. Of course, to speak frankly to you, we in our early days could not take it well that the Sister had to leave the Ramakrishna Mission because of her connections with the revolutionary movement. We were then rather terribly aggrieved and annoyed at the stand the Ramakrishna Mission and Swami Brahmananda had taken in this matter. We were then all youthful hot-blooded revolutionaries, mad and reckless in our determination of freeing the country at any cost. Nivedita in those days, was to our eyes the Joan of Arc, and Swamiji was to us—the revolutionaries of Bengal—the Prophet of emancipation, the Awakener of the consciousness of freedom. Many among us therefore mistook the treatment of the Ramakrishna Mission towards Nivedita for an expression of loyalty to the then rulers of

2. From reliable sources it has been gathered that this was how he himself spelt his name.

the country. This misconception had been nourished by us, at least by me, for many years. It was removed only recently when I was convinced that Nivedita's disowning herself from the membership of the Ramakrishna Mission was just an apparent affair, a means to protect the new-born Belur Math from the suspicion and the possible wrath of the ruling Government. Of course, we were then not aware of the fact that it was Swamiji himself who gave explicit directive against any sort of involvement with politics of the Ramakrishna Mission. It was therefore not possible for the Mission to support the activities of Nivedita. All these are, however, the results of my studies and inquiries made much later in my life. But in this connection one thought comes to my mind again and again. It is this: I have heard that in every major and serious issue Swami Vivekananda and all his brother-disciples used to seek for the counsels of the Mother and her decisions and instructions were indiscriminately accepted as the final and supreme. Nivedita's going away from the Belur Math was definitely a very significant issue to the Math. I personally believe that behind such an extraordinary decision that the authorities of the Belur Math took in regard to Nivedita there was the contribution of the profound practical wisdom of the Mother. The news of Nivedita's separation from the Math was spread in such a manner that not only the British Government, but also the public in general and the revolutionaries in particular failed to read the import behind it. As a result, it helped the British Government to be complacent on the one hand and the patriotic public to be aggrieved and pained on the other. But this was in no way a political stratagem. The idea behind this was too high to be construed that way. Firstly, because the decision that was taken by the Mission had not been prompted by any consideration of personal gain of any individual. Secondly, the custodians of the Ramakrishna Mission in those

days accomplished a sacred national duty by saving the Mission which Swami Vivekananda established for the greater good of humanity, from being nipped in the bud. Would that have been a loss for India alone, had the Ramakrishna Mission been then shattered to the ground at the wrath and suspicion of the British rulers? Swamiji planned and built up the Ramakrishna Mission for the welfare of the entire world, and therefore for its untimely death, posterity would accuse not only Nivedita, but Swami Brahmananda also on whom the mantle of Swami Vivekananda fell. That is why today I have not the least doubt that what the Ramakrishna Mission then took was the rightest possible decision. Only I personally love to think that behind this unique decision worked the wisdom, the vision and the foresight of the Holy Mother. Herself being the empress of the spiritual kingdom, she possessed wonderful pragmatism too.³

3. This view of Hemchandra is certainly his personal one. The Holy Mother undoubtedly possessed extra-ordinary practical wisdom and so long she was alive in mortal frame, her decision was the final and supreme in all significant matters of the Math and Mission. But she never offered any counsel or gave any decision by applying slightest trace of shrewdness. If She had given any decision at all in regard to Nivedita's affair (although so far our knowledge goes she did not give any), it was given only to maintain the rules of the Math. According to Math Rules set and formulated by Swamiji himself, members of the Math should have no connection whatsoever with politics. The Holy Mother was all love; but when the question of maintenance of the discipline and ideals of the Order came, Mother of the Sangha would take the most uncompromising stand. Nivedita writes: "Or is there need for severity? No foolish sentimentality causes her to waver. The novice whom she may condemn, for so many years to beg his bread, will leave the place within the hour. He who has transgressed her code of delicacy and honour, will never enter her presence again." (*The Master as I saw Him*, Udbodhan Office, Calcutta, 1972, Pp. 143-144). It should be noted that Nivedita wrote this quite a few years after she 'dissociated' herself from

In this regard she had no parallel in the history but herself; or if she has any, it is Shri Ramakrishna alone, none else and none else.

"The issue of Nivedita's leaving the Belur Math created great controversy during the days of our youth and it still agitates the minds of many. The observations I made to you today on this are all, as I have already mentioned, only recently arrived. I have had some discussion about this with Mr. Sankari Prasad Basu also, who called on me a few years ago. Till then I had the belief that Ramakrishna Mission and particularly Swami Brahmananda, have done injustice to Nivedita; they have neglected Nivedita. Sankari Babu said to me that I was wrong in my presumption. He also furnished various facts in favour of his point, most of which I have forgotten now. But he drew my attention to an important aspect which I remember. Of course, I did not give much emphasis on that at that moment. But gradually I began to realise its significance. It was in fact a revelation to me. The greatest proof of the fact of how greatly Nivedita was respected and loved by the Ramakrishna Mission was, Sankari Babu told me, that it was she who wrote the 'Introduction' to Swamiji's *Complete Works* which is looked upon as the *Gita* to the monks of Ramakrishna Mission. This she wrote in 1907 when she was out of the Ramakrishna Order. Swami Brahmananda and Swami Saradananda were then at the

the Math and Mission. One of her attending monks whom the holy Mother liked very much, committed some gross misconduct for which he had to leave the Order. Although pained severely at heart, she was firm like a rock in regard to the action taken against him. After the lapse of several years when someone mentioned the name of that particular person to Holy Mother, she told gravely: "Never tell his name to me. He violated the vows of monasticism". Such was she—so firm and strong in matters of rules and ideals of the Order.

helm of the Belur Math. They bestowed on Nivedita the sublime responsibility of introducing the gospel and works of their Beloved Leader to the world at large. And who was this Nivedita then? She was in the estimation of the outsiders none but one expelled and excommunicated from the fold of the Ramakrishna Mission. Sankari Babu correctly pointed out: "This single incident would silence all the antagonistic criticisms against the Ramakrishna Mission pertaining to the much-debated issue of Nivedita's separation from the Mission." Sankari Babu added: "Doesn't this incident sufficiently explain that so far as the Ramakrishna Mission was concerned, the separation of Nivedita from the Ramakrishna Mission was just a formal affair and nothing more than that?" I did not admit his views that day due to the influence of my long-nourished notion about the issue. But today I am convinced that he was absolutely right in his assessment."

"Incidentally, I refer here to a wrong idea about Nivedita which prevails in some quarters. I have seen many expressing the view that Nivedita was a staunch supporter of the Swadeshi dacoities. But what I have heard from our senior revolutionaries and also from the revolutionaries who were close to Nivedita herself, was just the reverse of it. I also believe that this idea about Nivedita has got no basis at all and is totally fictitious. Here I would mention an incident which I heard from some senior revolutionary leaders. Once several members of a terrorist group which was known to her, related to Nivedita a plan of dacoity they sought to commit near Calcutta. But as soon as she heard of it, she got terribly furious and scolded them right and left. She firmly asked them to cancel their plan then and there. She did not remain satisfied with that. She informed the leader of that group of their plan, made him interfere in the matter and thus got hundred per cent assured of even the remo-

test possibility of the plan being accomplished into action."

"With her political insight Nivedita understood that the Swadeshi dacoities will cause great harm to the freedom movement itself. The general mass would take off their sympathy from the revolutionaries on humanitarian grounds. People would gradually harbour a sense of terror, suspicion and disbelief in their minds against the revolutionaries. Apart from these, there were chances of avarice, cruelty, etc. getting permeated among the revolutionaries themselves and the natural consequence of this was nothing but fall from the ideal on their part. That the freedom movement suffered to a great extent due to the acts of Swadeshi dacoities was a fact and there is no doubt about that. To speak the truth, I myself was one of those who believed in the efficacy of the Swadeshi dacoities for the purpose of achieving liberation. Although Nivedita was immensely impulsive by nature, she was endowed with profound political wisdom too. Our national leaders of those days regarded her counsels to be highly valuable. Aurobindo's case can be cited for an instance. It was she who advised Aurobindo to leave Bengal and to take shelter in Pondicherry as she scented beforehand the conspiracy of the British to imprison him again. Not only that. Nivedita had remarkable contribution regarding other necessary arrangements and allied matters in connection with this incident also. She took upon her own shoulders all the responsibilities of regularly publishing the two journals of Aurobindo viz. *The Karmayogin* and *The Dharma* during his absence. That is why Aurobindo's absence could not have been detected by the British Government and he fully availed himself of this opportunity and slipped away beyond their clutches."

"I was speaking of the extraordinary practical knowledge of the Holy Mother and of her great love and affection for those who

were revolutionaries in their pre-monastic lives and for Nivedita. But there is in fact nothing to be surprised in that if we think of the special role she was destined to play. In our personal experiences we all know that it is the mothers who are always more affectionate and possess more practical sense than the fathers. And this 'Mother' is not the Mother of the Ramakrishnites alone, she is the Mother of all, the Universal Mother. She is the embodiment of an all-devouring, world-inundating Mother-Power that sustains and nourishes humanity, for the resurgence of which God incarnated Himself this time as Shri Ramakrishna. And this, I believe, is not only one, but one of the greatest among the varied aspects of the Ramakrishna Incarnation."

"I was a revolutionary, but I have never ceased to be a revolutionary. I am still a revolutionary. I am a revolutionary all my life. Revolution is my obsession and its germs permeate through every corpuscle of my blood. And that blood was stimulated by the galvanic touch of none else than Vivekananda himself. Therefore, so long that blood flows in this body, the obsession of revolution won't leave me for even a moment. That is why I get attracted, even today, to him in whomsoever I smell revolution. Thus I have got interested in the lives of the famous revolutionaries of the world, viz. Mazzini, Garibaldi, Kamal Pasha, Lenin, Marx, Mao Tse Tung, and Subhas Chandra. I have been familiar with their life-histories. The biographies of Mazzini and Garibaldi I read during my early youth or even before that. And I saw Subhas Chandra, the great revolutionary of this country, from very close quarters. I witnessed his advent in the Indian scene and also his majestic ascent. But compared to Swamiji these great revolutionaries are only children. And Shri Ramakrishna? He is the King, the crown-gem of all revolutionaries ever witnessed by the world. And there also Sarada Devi is his

worthy consort. It may be asked 'Where are the signs of revolution in them, Shri Ramakrishna and Sarada Devi?' Yes, they are there. The seeds of superrevolution remain unnoticed in their apparently quiet, placid and silent lives. The Great Trinity—Ramakrishna-Sarada-Vivekananda—is the symbol of a gigantic and colossal revolution to be ushered in the future world. They have brought about an immense revolution in the thought and consciousness of the entire world. There is no outward agitation, no dazzle of movement in the revolution they have initiated. One or two centuries may be passed over to get its external manifestations caught in the view of men. But this Revolution which I like to designate as the 'Ramakrishna Revolution', has never

ceased to function. It goes on working unheard and unnoticed. The nature of this revolution is to steadily unravel the treasures of man hidden within himself and by the process of evolution of his thought to lead him on and on till he reaches the state of his perfection. The people of the coming age will see the entire world completely deluged with the waves of this silent revolution."⁴

4. Hemchandra's words reminded me of what Will and Ariel Durant said: "The only real revolution is in the enlightenment of the mind and the improvement of character, the only real emancipation is individual, and the only real revolutionists are philosophers and saints." (*Lessons of History* Simon and Schuster, New York, 1968 p. 72.).

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION: THEN AND NOW

SWAMI BRAHMESHANANDA

"Of all the forces that have worked and are still working to mould the destinies of the human race, none, certainly is more potent than that the manifestation of which we call religion."¹ While religion is one of the most ancient forces guiding humanity, science is among the youngest of such forces. Both are still playing their part in the happiness and misery of man on this planet. These two forces have interacted and confronted each other in a very interesting manner through the centuries. A study, therefore, of their interaction is not only fascinating but also instructive.

Scores of books have been written on the

subject of 'Science and Religion' in the past few decades. In fact this has been one of the most popular subjects for debates and discussions, especially in the West. In India, however, the debate has remained confined to a few philosophers and thinkers, and the common masses had neither now nor in the past bothered about a conflict between science and religion. India is a religious country and in every age religious leaders with spiritual attainments have been born to strengthen the religious faith of the people. Secondly, science had never attained such ascendancy in the academic or practical fields in India as to challenge religion. Finally, religion had always been a matter of personal faith and was never centralised into an organised Church, as in the West, whose authority could be challenged,

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. II, Mayavati Memorial Edition., 1983, p. 57.

Nonetheless, the present attempts for technological advancement in India have stimulated a debate among the Indian intelligentsia also.

The subject of 'Science versus Religion' can be studied in three different ways. We may compare and contrast the two: their definitions, methods, impact on man and society, areas of opposition and co-operation, practical applicability etc. of each. The second way is to study the historical evolution of their interaction or conflict. Finally, we may take up each of the branches of science like physics, biology, psychology and study the religious phenomenon in their framework. Here we shall try to trace the evolution of science-religion problem in the historical context.

We shall not try to define either science or religion. In fact any attempt to do so at this stage might land us into serious difficulty. Religion, for example, can have a dozen valid definitions. In dictionaries it is defined as 'a system of faith'. Others, however, consider religions primarily a search for supersensuous truth, a matter of direct experience in which sense it is called mysticism. It has also a strong ethical and moral dimension. Its opponents see it only as a mass of irrational dogmas and superstitions. For most people, however, religion means faith coupled with rituals, prayers, temples and worship.

Science, too, has various connotations. Some equate it with search for truth, others with pure reason. As '*lucifera*' it is knowledge; as '*fructifera*' it is technology. It also conduces to a mental attitude called scientific temper. The common man, however, equates it with satellites and computers, sophisticated gadgets for medical diagnosis and warfare. Insead of trying to define, therefore, let us embark upon the historical survey of the science-religion relationship. In doing so, we shall be able to cover all the various aspects of the two.

II

Period of Religious Supremacy

Western science is comparatively recent in human history. Religion is decidedly more ancient. All major religions of the world have originated out of the teachings of God-men, prophets or rishis which were later compiled into books. These God-men are such powerful personalities, and have such a charisma that they command spontaneous adoration and faith in their teachings. This original charisma and faith generally get crystallised into a system of philosophy, rituals, and a way of life, and thus takes the form of a religion or movement. In the first phase of the conflict, therefore, religion commands supreme and absolute authority. The teachings of the prophet and the scripture are considered the final proof of everything secular or spiritual.

In the early part of the sixteenth century, Copernicus propounded the principle of heliocentric universe as against the earlier geocentric concept. Luckily he was on the death bed when his newly published book was released. The copies of his book were burnt and had he been alive he too would have met with the same fate. This actually happened to Bruno, who was a priest as well as a scientist, and had the courage to present the facts before the Pope. Bruno was prosecuted, chased from place to place, imprisoned and tortured and finally burnt alive. Then came Galileo, the father of modern mathematics and geology. He too was vehemently opposed and humiliated by the Church.

In the Muslim world, too, secular knowledge was underrated. When Islamic forces conquered Alexandria, Khalif Umar ordered the great library there to be burnt. His argument was that if the knowledge stored in it was contained in the Holy Quran, it was useless; if it was extraneous, it was harmful if not positively dangerous.

A different view is expressed in the Upanishads which consider the knowledge of matter as inferior to the knowledge of the SELF within. Narada approached sage Sanat Kumara for instruction. Sanat Kumara wanted to know what he had already learnt. Narada then gave a big list of all branches of knowledge, all arts and sciences, starting from the four Vedas, and including even archery, astrology, etc. Yet he was unable to transcend sorrow. Sanat Kumara said that all his learning was mere verbal knowledge. In the *Mundaka Upanishad* the material sciences are called *apara vidya* or inferior knowledge. There is another higher knowledge, the *para vidya*, the Brahma-vidya by which everything is known. Despite the assertion that spiritual knowledge is higher, the same Upanishad tells the seeker of knowledge that both these kinds of knowledge must be cultivated in our lives—*Dve vidye veditavye—Para cha eva apara cha* (One must learn two kinds of knowledge, sacred and secular). This is the Vedantic vision about the complimentary nature of the physical and spiritual sciences. This is a far more comprehensive vision compared to the violent intolerance of the so-called *faithful* of the middle ages in the West. Swami Vivekananda had gone to preach the Vedanta philosophy in the West. Ingersoll, the famous agnostic orator, once told Vivekananda that had he come to USA to preach Vedanta fifty years earlier, he would have been burnt alive.

Why does religion offer such stiff resistance to secular knowledge or Science? As has already been pointed out religions are based on scriptural testimony, and scriptures contain not only universal spiritual truths but also dogmas based on local beliefs, superstitions, and social conditions, which are also believed to be infallible utterances of the prophets. Scientific refutation of even one such superstition, one such dogmatic statement, falsifies the whole scripture.

Refutation of even one illogical statement shakes the faith in, and raises doubt about the infallibility of even the vital truths contained therein, thus shaking the very foundation of an individual's life or a social structure based and built on it.

But there are some deeper, more psychological reasons which prompt even many saner, more liberal believers to protest against the purely rational approach of science. Science, they say, creates a deterministic universe. It tries to encompass truth within the limits of human reason. Man, however, wants to go beyond reason and to commune with the divine through love and faith. Reason is not the fit instrument for knowing the whole truth. The main opposition is not with scientific discoveries, but the dry rationalistic approach of science towards the realisation of Ultimate Truth.

III

The Ascendency of Science

The resistance of religion, however, did not last long and a time came when science became all-powerful. Although religion had fought for every inch of the ground, it was defeated against truths discovered by science. It was during this phase when the people of the West had lost faith in their old religion and were seeking something more rational, that Swami Vivekananda had visited America, and the stand he took could be considered one of the approaches to the problem. What Swami Vivekananda tried was to prove that religious approach in essence was scientific, and that true religion is comparable to any other scientific discipline. Introducing 'Raja Yoga' Swami Vivekananda says: "The science of Raja Yoga proposes to put before humanity a practical and scientifically worked out method of reaching this truth (of religion)".²

2. Ibid., Vol. I, 1984, p. 128.

"The teachers of the science of Yoga therefore declare that religion is not only based upon experience of ancient times, but that no man can be religious until he has the same perceptions himself. Yoga is the science which teaches us how to get these perception."³

"Is religion to justify itself by the discoveries of reason, through which every other science justifies itself? Are the same methods of investigation, which we apply to sciences and knowledge outside to be applied to the science of religion? In my opinion this must be so, and I am also of opinion that the sooner it is done the better. If a religion is destroyed by such investigations, it was then all the time useless, unworthy superstition; and the sooner it goes the better. ... All that is dross will be taken off, no doubt, but the essential parts of religion will emerge triumphant out of this investigation. Not only will it be made scientific—as scientific, at least, as any of the conclusions of physics and chemistry—but will have greater strength, because physics or chemistry has no internal mandate to vouch for its truth, which religion has."⁴

To substantiate the above statements of Swami Vivekananda the classical example of Shri Ramakrishna's approach towards God and his 'experiments' with God are often quoted. Science is defined as "empirical knowledge, universally verifiable by experiment." A spirit of enquiry into the nature of truth, objectivity and precision in observation and expression are the cardinal features of science. All these features are demonstrated in Shri Ramakrishna's approach towards the truth of religion. When he started worshipping the image of Mother Kali as the priest, he earnestly prayed to her asking "Mother, are you merely a stone image (*mrinmayi*) or do you have a cons-

cious reality (*chinmayi*)?" That means, he wanted to find out the reality behind the image in front of him. He would also pray, "Mother, you revealed yourself to Ramprasad and Kamalakanta, why don't you reveal yourself unto me?" This was an attempt at universal verification of the truth which was experienced by earlier scientists in the realm of spirituality. He said the same thing to Swami Vivekananda when he had asked a question regarding the proof of the existence of God. Shri Ramakrishna's answer was: "I see God, just as I see you only in a much intenser sense. You can also see him if you follow my instructions". This reply also fulfils the criterion of precision in as much as it attempts to describe God in as clear terms as possible.

During the period when Shri Ramakrishna was engaged in sadhana, a lady ascetic named Bhairavi Brahmani guided him in the practice of the Tantras in accordance with the scriptures. By attaining success in these practices, Shri Ramakrishna further confirmed the efficacy of the spiritual methodology as described in the Tantras. Later a meeting of scholars well-versed in scriptures and adepts in spiritual disciplines was convened in which Shri Ramakrishna presented the results of his experiments in the spiritual realm. The scholars confirmed the authenticity of his experiences. This was like presenting the results of one's scientific experiments before a conference of learned scientists.

IV

The rational defence offered by Swami Vivekananda and the experimental proof of the scientific verifiability of religious experiences offered by Shri Ramakrishna, however, do not impress a group of dogmatic scientists who have developed an almost superstitious reverence for physical sciences. It is not that only religious people are supersti-

3. Ibid., p. 127.

4. Ibid., p. 367.

tious. The so-called scientists can also be narrow-minded and may have such a 'single-minded devotion' to their concept of science, as to reject truth from any other source, or of any other domain. These scientists hold that as science had been proving religious dogmas false, one after the other, a day would come when religion as a whole will be disproved. Howells gives very sound reason for such an assumption. He states, "Everything religious is founded on supernatural, the unseen. Now our whole (scientific, technological) culture fights tooth and nail every week-day to see the unseen, to drive the supernatural and mystical back at every point. This can have only one effect, which is to throw away religious belief. Philosophers and others try desperately to hush up this conflict of science and religion, and suggest various kinds of adjustments and refurnishments of belief, but these are not promising because they are generally reduced to a set of ethics and a highly abstract idea of the divine, and could hardly serve as a religion that people at large could get their teeth into".⁵

Another change envisaged in religion is its loss of sovereignty. Religion would remain but it would lose its power. It would be like a change from absolute monarchy to limited monarchy and finally democracy.

What would happen to the social function served so long by religion? The worshippers of science propose what is called scientific humanism. According to these thinkers science not only provides tools, it is even capable of providing values and direction to humanity. Pure science with its passion for truth and human welfare is one of the noblest pursuits of man. A scientific frame of mind includes the ability to classify facts, recognise their sequence and relative significance and ability to form

judgment upon these facts, unbiased by personal feeling. This type of mental makeup which is called scientific temper is entirely sufficient, in the opinion of these thinkers, for the growth and welfare of man.

There was, however, another group of moderate scientists who tried to ascribe proper places to each, science and religion. Religion had been serving as an integrating and stabilizing factor in society, and when these liberal scientists saw that unqualified attacks by science on every aspect of religion were depriving society of even the beneficial values nurtured by religion so far, they sought to harmonize the two. Newton, for example, pursued science within a religious frame of mind. He said that God creates an orderly universe and scientists discover those laws with the help of which God governs his creation. Weber ascribed to science and religion separate domains, and said that science is concerned with the problem of empirical causation while religion deals with the problem of meaning. Another scientist Subba Rao beautifully reconciled the two: "Science simply prolongs life; religion deepens it." Others were of the opinion that science is based on reason; religion on faith. Science satisfies the head, religion the heart. Religion is based on and seeks internal experience, science seeks to study the external world, and is based on sensory experiences.

Some were of the view that the conflict between science and religion was only incidental and was based on unimportant matters; that science was against dogma, irrational belief, superstition etc. and not against religion as such. Science disproves specific religious belief and not religion in its pure form, and that there is no general conflict of science with religion defined in functional terms. Cultivation of science in the long run will contribute to the health of religion. Or it may be that a particular religion may be destroyed, but new religions

⁵. Howells, quoted by Yinger J.M., *The Scientific Study of Religion*, The Macmillan Company, London., 1957, p. 61.

or quasi-religious movements would appear. Some went to the extent of saying that it is not that religion is good science, but science is good religion.

V

Scientific disillusionment

This brings us to the state of affairs as it stands today. This final phase of the conflict between science and religion is characterised by absence of vehemence on either side. Contrary to the prophecy of the supporters of science, religion has not died out although it had to be interpreted in order to satisfy the increasingly scientific temper of the people. It still continues to flourish and is throwing out new branches better suited for the times. New faiths and neo-religious movements are springing up all over the world to satisfy the religious needs of man in a world dominated by physical sciences.

As has been pointed out by the celebrated Sociologist, Max Weber, religion is concerned with the problem of meaning. One of the sociological definitions of religion is a "system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with ultimate problems of human life. It expresses their refusal to capitulate to death, to give up in face of frustration."⁶ Science has not been able to define life nor conquer death and as long as misery in the form of disease, old age, death and frustration persists, man would continue to feel insecure and be in need of religion. Man's eternal and insatiable thirst for immortality and unalloyed bliss can be satisfied never by any material science, but only by religion. Religion in some form or the other man must have.

On the other hand, science has started realising its limitations both as 'lucifera' and 'fructifera'. As has already been pointed

out, objectivity is an important mark of science, which in turn is based upon the object-subject dichotomy, commonly recognised in philosophy as the 'Cartesian Dichotomy'. It divides the universe into two: the subject, the knower, the observer, the enjoyer; and the object, the known, the observed, the object of enjoyment. Such an attitude has very important practical implications. Expressed in crude terms, it means that man collectively or individually is the enjoyer while nature and other creatures are object to be enjoyed by him. While this principle had been instrumental in phenomenal advance of material sciences, it has also made man heartless, and a ruthless exploiter of nature. Technology, the daughter of modern science, has helped in this exploitation, and the same process has brought man to the brink of ecological disaster. Humanity has already witnessed the havoc wrought by atom bombs which were mere toys in comparison to the nuclear arsenal piled up in the world today. The benefits of modern scientific technology are overshadowed by its deleterious effects. Although a nuclear holocaust may not after all take place, since the big powers have realised the danger of toying with nuclear weapons, an ecological catastrophe is very much a possibility, and none but the modern science with its heartless objective philosophy is to be blamed for it. In fact, Fritjof Capra, the author of the best seller *'The Tao of Physics'*, in the first chapter of the book, which he has significantly named as "Modern Physics—A path with a heart", confesses that "This book aims at improving the image of science."⁷

Science as basic science or 'lucifera' too is facing disillusionment. It is realising the limitations of its methodology in solving the fundamental questions regarding reality. The three theories which had the profoundest

⁶. Ibid., p. 7.

⁷. Capra F., *The Tao of Physics*, Fontana Collins., 1975, p. 25.

effect upon the modern scientific thought are the theory of Relativity of Einstein, the quantum mechanics of Plank, and Heisenberg's Uncertainty principle. Physics had hoped to solve the mystery of the universe by knowing the nature of the ultimate particles constituting it. But the above theories have proved that there are no such thing as ultimate particles. They are quanta of energy which move in discontinuous waves and can be described only as probabilities. They are not isolated entities but are more like inter-connections, so that nature is something like a complicated web of these interconnections. Uncertainty principle proves that a strict law of cause and effect does not apply in the world of subatomic particles. Theory of Relativity has shown that all our scientific knowledge based on sense-perceptions, is only relative.

Another important revelation is with regard to the process of observation in the study of the sub-atomic processes. Uncertainty principle proves beyond doubt that the consciousness of the observer and the act of observation itself affect the observed phenomenon. Hence a purely objective description of nature is not valid because it is difficult to make a distinction between the observer and observed. Thus the universe must be considered a dynamic, inseparable whole which includes the observer, too, in it. It is, in the language of modern physics, a holistic universe, and the so-called objective reality is, in fact, 'omnijective' (subjective + objective).

These conclusions of modern physics are so startling that they have shaken the very foundations, the basic assumptions of science. Many scientists have started speaking like mystics and this has led many to draw conclusion that modern physics supports an Eastern mystic world view. The fact, however, is that physics has simply led to metaphysics, and science to philosophy.

Although it is true that there are some

apparent similarities between the descriptions of the ultimate Reality found in Eastern mystic literature like the Upanishads, and the description of sub-atomic processes as provided by the modern physics, the domain of activity and the methodology of these two great branches of human endeavour are vastly dissimilar. The reason is that in the mystic consciousness Reality is apprehended directly and immediately without any mediation, any symbolic elaboration, any conceptualisation, or abstractions. Subject and object become one in a timeless, spaceless act. However, when a physicist looks at quantum reality or relativistic reality, he is not looking at things in themselves, at direct non-mediate reality. Rather he is looking at a set of highly abstract differential equations. If we were to try to understand the difference between mystic way and modern physicists' way of looking at the reality, with the help of Plato's well known illustration of cave men tied in a cave since birth in such a way that they could look only at the shadows and never towards the source of light, we may as well say that science studies only the shadows and not the light.

It is true that old physics, too, dealt with shadows and symbols, but the difference is that the modern physics has been forced to be aware of and to accept this fact. Once being aware that physics is dealing only with shadows, and not with light, sensitive physicists with an unquenching thirst for truth started looking beyond the cave and beyond physical sciences altogether. As Eddington carefully explains: "Briefly the position is this: We have learnt that the exploration of the external world by the methods of physical science leads not to a concrete reality but to a shadow world of symbols beneath which those methods are unadapted for penetrating. Feeling that there must be more behind, we return to our starting point in human consciousness, the

one centre where more might become known".⁸ That is why, so many pioneer physicists have started talking like mystics.

VII

Methods and domains

We have completed the historical survey of the conflict between science and religion and in doing so we have only considered two aspects of each viz. physics and mysticism. Science has many branches, and religion, too, has many dimensions. Before entering into them, however, let us wind up the topic related to physics and mysticism. Not all scientists would be willing to swallow without salt the conclusion that science deals with shadows and not with reality, even though supported by such authorities as Einstein, Eddington etc. We must, therefore, have a closer look at the question.

Each branch of science has a methodology and a domain in which it is applicable. Method is like the torch and domains are like the caves in which it is used for search. Method consists of all the various means and ways by which science gathers facts, collects data and information, and arrives at a conclusion. The scientific method could be either direct or indirect. Collecting data with the help of our senses is the most direct and simplest of methods. But for microscopic realities, for example, we need a magnifying apparatus so that we can study a 50, 100, or 10,000 times magnified *image* of the object. Although here an *image* is being observed and not the object itself, yet this is also considered a direct method. But there are certain scientific facts which can be studied by observing the effects of a phenomenon or by the reactions produced in certain processes. The amount of glucose present in

100 ml. of human blood is not measured by crystallizing it from 100 ml. of blood and then weighing it, but by measuring the depth of colour produced when diluted serum from half ml. of blood reacts with a specific chemical reagent, in a highly sensitive colour-detecting instrument. This is an example of indirect method of study, and the subtler and finer the objects studied, greater is the use of indirect methods. The knowledge thus acquired can be confirmed by any one by adopting similar methods. But in case of abstract sciences the process of confirmation is mostly by mental coherence. When a sub-atomic scientist conveys the results of his scientific experiment to another equally trained colleague, the latter confirms the truth of the former's observation by merely studying a highly complicated mathematical formula, due to mental coherence obtained by training. Thus each scientific methodology consists of direct and indirect observation, confirmation by mental coherence in understanding abstract mathematics and training.

Let us now study the domains available for the application of the aforementioned method. By domain we mean the realms of experience or aspects of reality, or modes of being, available for study. Various thinkers have proposed a number of such categories. According to Samkhya philosophy there are twenty-four elements. Vedanta speaks of five sheaths apart from the sixth i.e. consciousness. Western thinkers have suggested what they term as the "great chain of Being", which may have 3 to 25 items. For our purpose it will suffice to select a chain of five categories: matter, life, mind, individual consciousness and cosmic consciousness. It will be observed that each level in the great chain transcends and includes its predecessor. Each higher level contains functions, capacities or structures not found in or explainable only by the laws of the lower level, and not vice versa. Life transcends but includes matter,

8. Quoted by Ken Wilber, *Quantum Questions*, New Science Library, Shambhala, Boston, London, 1984, p. 10.

and not vice-versa. Biological structures contain material components and properties but structures purely material do not exhibit biological functions. Similarly the domain of mind transcends life, and includes it but not vice-versa, and so on. The characteristics of matter are mass, length, breadth, height and states like solid, liquid, gaseous, etc. The living organisms have these plus growth, metabolism, reproduction, etc. Living beings having mind have the properties of matter and life plus thoughts, ideas, emotions, instincts, etc. Living beings manifesting consciousness have the above plus awareness, self-restraint, ethical values, intuitive insights, etc.

Physics and chemistry are the sciences studying matter. Biology studies the phenomenon of life. Psychology is the science of mind and mysticism is the science which studies consciousness. We know that physics is different from and not contradictory to biology or psychology. Similarly mysticism considered as the science of spirit or consciousness is definitely and significantly different from physics, biology or psychology but not contradictory to any of these. The nearer the domains to each other, the greater are the similarities and parallels between the sciences of those domains. Physics is nearer to biology than to psychology, and psychology comes much closer to mysticism than to physics. While physics studies matter, psychology the mind which is the instrument of all study. In mysticism human consciousness is studied which is the basis of mind itself. And since the last domain of cosmic consciousness encompasses and transcends all preceding categories in the great chain of Being, its study is claimed to be the science of all sciences.

The difference between physics and mysticism lies not only in the domains but also in the methodology. The methods used in physics are more direct and external as compared to mysticism in which they become much more indirect and internal, though the truth thus known is not private but universal. Any one with proper training can confirm them. Although the methods used by mysticism are more internal, it is claimed that the reality is perceived without the mediation of mind and senses.

What about the parallels between the conclusions of modern physics and Eastern mysticism? When modern physics states that the universe is something like a network of interconnected forces and a continuum, it is only talking about the material universe, and not about life, mind, etc. Eastern philosophy states that there is not only a continuity or wholeness at the physical level, which is called *bhutakasha*, but this is interpenetrated successively by a life force continuum the *pranakasha*, the mind-continuum or *chittakasha* and finally the all pervading consciousness, the *chidakasha*. The description of Brahman as the all pervading interpenetrating consciousness pertains to this *chidakasha* and not to the reality discovered by modern physics.

Arriving at conclusions as done by modern physics does not make a man mystic, nor does an intellectual understanding of the Eastern philosophies. In mysticism the underlying absolute reality of the universe is directly perceived. The whole personality and character of the perceiver is transformed. He becomes a sage, a seer, a man of God. And to do this one must follow the proper method and undergo rigorous training.

EVOLUTION OF HINDU AND BUDDHIST TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

G. VENKATARAMANA REDDY

The practice of architecture comprises of two basic elements, art and engineering. Advancements in engineering are always associated with the growth of civilisation of a nation. But art is the reflection of the aesthetic capabilities linked up with cultural growth of the people. In engineering skills, when adequate material wealth is at their disposal, Indians can stand on par with the most scientifically advanced nations of the world. But their culture has reached a meeting point of several cultures of the World. They are now seeking the route along which they should proceed towards their cultural advancement without losing sight of the rich cultural heritage endowed by their ancestors. Many know little of their cultural heritage which includes art, architecture, music, language, philosophy, etc. Therefore, this subject is chosen so as to give a brief introduction about the evolution of "Hindu Temple Architecture" which forms the major part of Indian architecture.

Much has been written on Hindu Architecture. If some writers have meticulously traced its evolution through the ages, others have marvelled at its pleasing aesthetics and the engineering skills of its builders. A few have struggled to discover its meaning and symbology. But most of the writings do not keep the average Indian in view and supply him with all the essential information in non-technical terms. This is exactly what has been attempted in this paper.

This paper, deals with Buddhist and Hindu temple architecture and not on Hindu architecture as a whole. In this regard it may be worthwhile to point out that the

deep religious faith of people of the Hindus did not give as much importance to their individual abodes and secular buildings, as much they gave to the abodes to the omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient gods. While they chose impermanent materials for the abodes of the perishable human beings, they built the homes for their gods with durable material like stone. In spite of the ravages of time and political upheavals, these temples have remained to highlight the cultural attainments and engineering skills of the people who built them. Therefore, the study of the ancient architecture of any people, mainly deal with their ecclesiastical architecture and India is no exception. The architecture of the secular buildings has always been influenced by the motifs found in the architecture of their temples and other related structures.

Egyptian, Sumerian, Assyrian, Persian and several other known ancient civilisations have vanished. The Greeks, who drew their inspiration from some of the above civilisations and cultures, developed their own indigenous norms till they were conquered politically by Romans. But this same Greek culture and civilisation became the very basis of the Romans. Christian culture, which succeeded the Romans, produced several beautiful churches and monasteries all over Europe in the style popularly known as Gothic. The gold-hungry Spaniards and other sea-faring nations of Europe exterminated the cultures of Incas of South America, Aztecs and Red Indians of North America. But the Indian culture and civilization which was contemporary to that of Egyptians and Sumerians has survived with

abundant enrichment during the course of last eight thousand years.

In the second half of 19th Century, James Fergusson wrote the History of Indian and Eastern Architecture. According to him, architectural history of India begins with the advent of Buddhism in the 5th Century B.C. and especially with the Mauryan Dynasty which begins in 3rd Century B.C. But the age of Indian History of Architecture was pushed back by over 50 centuries when the Indus valley cities of Mohenjodaro and Harappa were discovered. The exposed remains of these cities throw light on the high levels of the civic and socio-economic life led by their citizens. Subsequent discovery of the contemporary cities and towns at Lothal, Bet Dwarka and several other ancient settlements in several parts of India has led us to conclude that the description of plans and beautiful architectural forms of cities and their mansions and the way of life of their populations, in the great epics like *Mahabharata* are not fictitious. Little is known about the ways of life of the people, their settlements and the type of building they lived in during the periods in between the establishment of Indus cities and the spread of Buddhism in the 3rd century B.C. by Ashoka the Great who ruled over practically whole of India including the areas covered by modern Afghanistan and Southern parts of Uzbekistan State of U.S.S.R. Perhaps as in the case of Sumerians, Assyrians and Babylonians of the river valley of Euphrates and Tigris, the buildings which were built in India were with bricks and wood which could not stand against the ravages of time. A great deal of research is required to clearly establish the ways of life and the art forms and architecture of the people during this missing period of Indian History covering over fifty centuries. However the great philosophical and literary contributions like the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, great epics of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*

belonging to this missing period are at the disposal of the students of Indian History to throw light regarding the high levels of culture and civilisation attained by the people who lived prior to 5th Century B. C.

Buddhist Architecture

Buddhism initially spread in the Gangetic plains and later due to the efforts of the missionaries supported by Emperor Ashoka, large sections of Indian population embraced Buddhism. Buddhist monks carried the teachings of Tathagata (Buddha) to several distant countries like Ceylon, Persia, Egypt, Greece, and China. Two centuries before the birth of Christ the monasteries of the Buddhist monks are reported to have existed in Alexandria in Egypt, Antioch and Baghdad in the Middle East and Athens in Greece. These monks could have gone over there through the known land and sea routes of the enterprising merchants of India who had been trading with the people of China, East Indies, Egypt, Middle Eastern and Mediterranean countries (Rome and Greece). Rock-cut Buddhist architecture made a beginning only in the 3rd Century B.C. The Rock-cut building techniques are known to have been already well developed by the ancient Egyptians and Hittites in Asia Minor even two to three thousand years earlier. It is quite possible that these techniques were brought to India by the Buddhist clergy who returned from Egypt and Asia Minor through the sea-ports along the Western coast line of India. It could be seen that the earlier Rock-Cut architecture first appeared along the hill slopes of Western Ghats which formed part of the Satavahana Empire of Deccan and later of the Chalukyas and Rashtrakutas who ruled right upto 9th Century A.D., the territory lying in between the Rivers Narmada and Krishna. Kanheri Buddhist Caves which fall within the modern Bombay Metropolitan region, Karla and Baja caves in the slopes of mountains lying

in between Bombay and Pune, and the early caves at Ajanta are the ones which were built when the rock-cut building techniques first appeared in India. The Rock-Cut building techniques may be foreign but the architecture of these structures was purely indigenous. They are in the shape of "Viharas" (living quarters) and "Chaityas" (Prayer Halls) of the Buddhist clergy whose benefactors were the rich merchants of those days. Therefore their hermitages were located in the proximity of their benefactors which could at the same time provide serene environment conducive to their monastic life. During this early period, several stupas (Memorial mounds) had been erected in many parts of India. They usually enshrined the relics of the venerated Buddhist saints. These simple stupas with no images of Buddha, symbolised the living presence of Buddha and they became the open-air temples, with monastic quarters built around them. Sanchi stupa near Bhopal and Stupa at Sarnath near Varanasi are some of the best examples. Rock-cut chaityas contained votive stupas at their aspidal ends without embellishments. Their various structural forms i.e., pillars, voluted roofs, architraves, cornices were the replicas of the free standing contemporary structures mainly made of wood and brick with plastering.

Right upto first century A.D. the followers of Buddha recognised Him only as their venerable teacher and their scriptures comprised the compilation of the teachings of Buddha and the codes laid down by his direct disciples. Therefore, their prayer halls or other buildings of this epoch did not contain images of Buddha. But the important events of his life were highlighted through symbolic motifs i.e. Birth—elephant, renunciation—horse, enlightenment—Bodhi tree, first Sermon—Dharma Chakra; and nirvana (passing away) during full moon between two sal trees. Various parts of buildings were ornamented with human

figures or common and legendary animals and birds, and they also contained the images of their benefactors (kings, queens and merchant princes) and relief panels depicting the scenes from the contemporary life of the people. These panels, especially those in the Toranas and the railings of Bharhut and Mathura stupas, contain sculptures depicting the models of buildings of the commoners and nobility, and their architectural characteristics.

Buddhist Architecture from first century A.D.

In all nations of the world, their architecture had developed as complementary to their evolving culture and religious philosophies. During 2nd century A.D. Buddhism had divided itself into two distinct sects with their own philosophies i.e. Hinayana and Mahayana. Hinayanists continued to venerate Buddha as their teacher (Guru) and restricted their scriptures to the teachings of Tathagata (Buddha) and his direct disciples. It is claimed that the great Acharya Nagarjuna was the founder of Mahayana system of Buddhism. According to this system, practice of religion had become complex with the development of elaborate philosophies and epics like Jataka tales which talked about the earlier lives of Buddha as Bodhisattvas. Doctrines of Mahayana permitted the worship of images of Buddha in the human form and soon the Buddhists of India became the followers of Mahayana Buddhism. The Buddhist monks belonging to this new sect carried Buddhism to China, Japan, Tibet and several South-East Asian countries where Buddhism is surviving even to this day as the religion of the majority of their populations. This new popular wave in Buddhism had encouraged rich ornamentation of various parts of the Viharas, Chaityas and Stupas. Vast areas of the walls of these buildings and the spherical surfaces of the stupas were covered with sculptured relief panels and beautifully

painted frescoes depicting the episodes from life of Buddha and from the Jataka tales. The world famous Ajanta caves with frescoes, the stupas of Mathura, Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda (Vijayapuri) with action-filled sculptures are some of the best specimens belonging to this period. Mahayana Buddhist art and architecture reached its zenith in the sixth century A.D.

Decadence of Buddhism and Re-emergence of Hinduism

Twenty-five centuries ago India was endowed with highly developed philosophies in the shape of Vedas, Upanishads and other Scriptures. But they were all confined to a few Ashramas dominated by Sanskrit-knowing Brahmins. Others were left with no knowledge of these highly developed philosophies. The common man was left out as a rudderless boat to practise on his own degraded forms of worship. At that time preachings of Buddha in the language of the common man spread like wild fire and large sections of the population embraced Buddhism. But during the course of next ten centuries, Buddhist religion had become highly complex with several philosophies which the common man could not comprehend. Tantric practices which crept into Buddhism resulted in elaborate rituals. The simple words of wisdom and compassion of Buddha were lost sight of. Buddhist clergy in the seventh century A.D. was caring more for securing the patronage of the political lords, rather than guiding the commoner in pursuing the ideals of life. Thus the common man who claimed to be the follower of Buddha was found to be ignorant of the noble message of Buddha. At that time in South India, a beginning had been made to forge a renaissance in Hinduism which was fostered by Alvars (the Vaishnavite saints) and Nayanars (the shaivite saints). Their soul-stirring devotional songs in vernacular brought the people back from Jainism and

Buddhism to the fold of Hinduism with renewed vigour. But in Central and Northern India the wisdom of the Vedas and Upanishads was confined within certain scattered groups of learned Brahmins. The learned among them who were styled as Mimamsakas, were more interested in the ritualistic parts of the Vedas and other holy scriptures, and never ventured into the realms of the high philosophies of the Upanishads. The illiterate common man was exposed to the decadent Buddhist rituals and the esoteric Hindu ecclesiastical clans like Bhairawas, Kapalikas, Aghories, Tantrics etc. In the 7th century A.D. when such was the condition regarding the religious life of the people, Adi Shankaracharya, one of the greatest of the religious reformers of India, through his Advaitic (non-dualistic) philosophy, annihilated Buddhism by absorbing the essence of the teachings of Buddha as a part of reviving Hinduism. He gave Advaita philosophy to the learned and the Bhakti cult (devotion, of love) to the common man. He grouped the Hindus into six distinct groups i.e. Vaishnavites, Shaivaites, Shaktas, Koumaras, Ganapatyas and Sauryas (believers of Vishnu, Shiva, Shakti, Kumara, Ganpati and Surya respectively). He also made the people to realise that there is a basic unity in the diversity of faiths. These religious groups were in need of temples. The epoch of building Hindu temples with permanent materials like stone actually began in the 4th century A.D. and this process was accelerated from 7th century onwards. The total architectural forms of these temples were conceived not merely to make them look beautiful, but also to make the worshippers feel the presence of the deities of their faith. In the process of evolving the architectural forms of the Hindu temples, builders always looked back to the worthy examples left behind by the Buddhists.

The Rock-cut building techniques of the Buddhists did not come to a grinding halt

when people switched over to Hinduism. Badami Chalukyas and their successors, Rashtrakootas of Deccan and Pahlavas in South continued to build rock-cut temples in their respective domains. The Rock-cut temples at Badami by Vatapi Chalukyas, Elephanta and Ellora caves by Rashtrakootas, and these techniques, ultimately climaxed by the exuberance of the free-standing Kailasanatha temple at Ellora which was fully carved out of a rocky hill slope. Notable Rock-cut temples of the Pahlavas are to be found at Mahabalipuram and many are scattered all over the kingdom which extended from River Krishna upto Kanya Kumari. Some of the unfinished cave temples at Mahabalipuram give a clue as to the methods adopted by the builders in carving out vertical cliffs into cave temples. Close scrutiny of these Hindu Rock-temples would reveal that most of them are not fully complete, as that of Rock-cut Buddhist Viharas and Chaityas which were used for the purpose for which they were built. On the other hand, the one built by Hindus were not for worship, but to serve as experimental models for training the sculptors in evolving architectural idioms to be used in their projected free-standing temples. The monolith unfinished temples (Rathas) at Mahabalipuram appear to be three-dimensional experimental models for perfecting the various architectural forms of the temples to be further evolved by the builders. When the Kailasanatha monolith temple at Ellora was built, several free-standing temples built in Deccan by the Chalukyans at Aihole, Pattadakal and Alampur and Pahlavan Kailasanatha temple at Kanchipuram and the shore temple at Mahabalipuram were existing. But this Ellora monolith temple appears to have been built to satisfy the ego of the patron Rashtrakoota king Krishna-I, who perhaps desired to build a masterpiece with all essential components, a complete free-standing temple carved out of solid rock.

Evolution of Temple Styles: Introduction

The simplicity of the preachings of Buddha was reflected in the Indian architecture of early Buddhists. When Buddhist philosophy and religious practices became elaborate with the induction of Mahayana system during first century of this era, correspondingly the architectural form of their viharas and Chaityas also became elaborate with richer ornamentation and extensive sculptured panels. It cannot be said that the Buddhists have built only Rock-cut Chaityas. There are remains of many free-standing Chaityas and Viharas left behind by them at several places in India, notably at Sarnath, Bodh-Gaya, Sanchi, Nalanda, Taxasila in the Northern half and at Vijayapuri, (Nagarjunakonda) Amaravati in the Southern half of India. Indian architecture of the Buddhists in Gandhara (comprising of North-West Frontier District of Modern Pakistan) and Afghanistan consists of distinct Idiom which evolved with the harmonious fusion of architectural orders of the Greek art. In the Buddhist buildings in various parts of India, whatever may be variations in the ornamental and design treatments, there had been unity in their basic architectural forms. When people *en masse* crossed over from Buddhism to Hinduism, it is quite possible that many of the Buddhist temples (to cite a few like Lakshmana temple at Sirpur of Raipur District and Telika Mandir at Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh) were converted into Hindu temples. The whole of Lakshmana temple at Sirpur is made of brick similar to the ruined temples at Nalanda and others in the Gangetic plains. Many ancient Hindu temples in Mahanadi and Narmada River valleys can be traced to their Buddhist origins. Further the Hindu temples built during the 4th to 8th century A.D. closely followed the architectural forms and details of the Buddhist counterparts.

Seventh century of the era can be consi-

dered to be the emergence of "Renaissance of Vedic Religion" (Sanatana Dharma). The Vedic scriptures which are called "Shrutis" contain three basic components. They are (1) Jnana Paada which contains the philosophy to realise absolute Brahman; (2) Charya Paada which includes all the mantras to be recited at various rituals; and (3) Kriya Paada which explains the methods and necessary procedures for performing various rituals. Within the framework of the contents of Vedas, detailed codes had been laid down in the shape of Agamas containing the details of the rituals to be observed in the worship of their Ishta Devata (Gods of their preference). For the consumption of the common man, puranas were also written based on the legends revolving round various aspects of these gods. While the knowledge regarding Agamas was confined to the Sanskrit-knowing priest class, master craftsmen were required to give shape to architectural forms of the temples according to the codes laid down in the Agamas. For these purposes "Vastu" and "Shilpa" Shastras came into existence clearly laying down the duties of the master craftsmen (Sthapati) and his specialist assistants Sutragrahi, Vardaki, Takshaka etc. and the procedures to be observed before and during construction of buildings, and the proportions governing the various architectural components of the temples, buildings and the images of the gods and goddesses.

Though Agamas which laid down the codes

of worship of a particular god, was almost common to all regions of India, the Shilpa or Vastu shastras were many, governing various architectural styles which had gradually developed in various regions i.e. North, Central and South India. The basic pattern of the plans of the temples being the same all over India, different styles of architectural forms of the superstructures were developed. They can be broadly bifurcated into Northern style called Nagara which is distinguished by curvilinear towers, and Southern style known as Dravida with its form of truncated pyramids. The third style which is called Vesara combines in itself both Northern and Southern styles. Subsequently a style named as Bhumiya was also evolved. The temples which have been built as per this style involved only a change of detailing, within the framework of the temples built according to the Nagara or Dravida styles. Varata style is recognised as a modified form of Bhumiya style and temples built as per this style are found in Northern Deccan, Gujarat and Rajasthan. In modification of Nagara style, a distinct regional style had developed in Kalinga Desha which consists of the whole of modern Orissa State, eastern districts of Madhya Pradesh forming part of Mahanadi basin and Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh adjacent to the Southern borders of Orissa State. The details regarding each of the above temple styles and their architectural forms will be discussed in a subsequent issue.

The waters of a swiftly flowing current move round and round at places in eddies and whirlpools, but passing these they resume their even course. So even the hearts of the pious fall at times into the whirlpools of despondency and unbelief, but those aberrations are only momentary. They do not last long.

—*Shri Ramakrishna*

KANHOPATRA : THE DEVOTEE OF KRISHNA

SWAMI VIPASHANANDA

The pure soul
Shall mount on native wings, disdaining
 little sport,
And cut a path into the heaven of glory,
Leaving a track of light for men to
 wonder at.

— *William Blake*

Mysterious are the ways of God. Who can comprehend everything about Him? It is not given to man to know everything about God. It is enough if we only realise Him.

“But God is unknowable without purity of mind and heart. In fact a man does not even desire to know God unless he has a pure mind. When the impurities of the mind are washed away, one realises God. The mind is like a needle covered with mud, and God is like a magnet. The needle cannot be united with the magnet unless it is free from mud. One should weep for God. Tears wash away the mud, which is nothing but lust, anger, greed and other evil tendencies, and the inclination to worldly enjoyments as well...”—said Shri Ramakrishna. And the Bible says, “Blessed are the pure in heart ; for they shall see God.” (New Testament: St. Mathew, v. 8).

Only the pure in heart sees God. One such person who realised God by the purity and devotion of her heart, and by a burning yearning for Him, was Kanhopatra, the daughter of a prostitute. Though living in the environs of vice and evil, she was able to raise herself above her restrictions by the sheer purity of her mind, and by a single-minded devotion and love for her chosen Deity, Lord Panduranga (Lord Krishna).

Mangalavedhe is a small village about 20 km. away from the famous pilgrim place

of Pandharpur in the State of Maharashtra. Shyama was the prostitute of Mangalavedhe. Born to her was a divine jewel of a daughter named Kanhopatra.** She was exceedingly beautiful—so beautiful as to put the celestial ‘apsaras’ to shame. As is the custom in that profession, she learnt the art of singing and dancing while she was still young. It was said that she so excelled in these arts as to put mythological enchantress like Rambha and Tilottama to shame!

The fame of her beauty and artistry spread far and wide. Kanhopatra remained unmarried because she could not find a match equal to her beauty and skills. Her mother Shyama always nagged her that had they gone to the king's palace, they could have earned more money and ornaments. But Kanhopatra thought otherwise. She had a different bent of mind which told her that 'all men in this mortal world are like fireflies before the sun'.

It so happened that one day she saw a procession of pilgrims (varkaris) passing through her village, carrying banners, singing devotional songs and dancing in ecstasy. She became curious. Whose praises were they so fervently singing? Whose love made them dance with such bliss? Her heart was stirred with the 'kirtanas' of the 'varkaris'.

Kanhopatra saluted the 'kirtana' party and asked them, 'Whereof such devotion ? Whereunto such singing and dancing ? Whereto the pilgrimage ?'

**** Some say that Kanhopatra was the contemporary of Sant Jnanadeva or Sant Jnaneshwara as he is popularly called. Others hold the opinion that she was born in the 15th century A.D. somewhere around the year 1468. The famous saints Damajipant and Chokamela also hailed from the same village, Mangalavedhe.**

They told her that they were going to Pandharpur where Panduranga (Shri Krishna) variously known as Vitthala and Vithoba dwells at the beseeching of Pundalika. They extolled the divine form and attributes of Shri Panduranga: 'He is corporeal, divine, supreme, infinite Mind, Spirit, Soul, Principle, Life, Truth, Love... Even the gods are unable to describe His glory. His beauty exceeds that of Lakshmi a billion fold. It is by His light that the moon and the sun revolve.'

On hearing this, Kanhopatra asked the saints whether the Lord—the Hridaynath—will accept her if she took refuge in Him in total surrender.

They replied that such an earnest and importunate seeker is very dear to the Lord. He readily accepts full responsibility of all those who surrender to Him and take refuge in Him. Sincere faith wins Him where even asceticism fails. Krishna had accepted even the humpbacked woman slave of king Kamsa of Mathura and turned her beautiful into His own likeness. A sinner like Ajamila and an untouchable like Chokhamela were at once accepted by Him because of their devotion to Him. By adoring Him, even heinous sinners as also men of low and impure birth, are redeemed. Says Narada in the *Bhaktisutra*:

'There is no distinction of caste, learning, beauty, birth, riches or rituals among those who are His devotees.'

Lord Shri Krishna Himself assures the same thing in the *Gita*:

*'Sarvadarman parityajya mamekam
sharanam vraja;
Aham tva sarvapapebhyo mokshayishyami
ma shuchah.'*

(Giving up all Dharma, seek refuge in Me alone; I shall liberate you from all sins; grieve not).

Those words electrified Kanhopatra. She could now discriminate between real and unreal. A strong desire to renounce the life of glamour, of opulence, of false pride and luxury and greed, rose in her. She rushed to her house and sought her mother's permission to go to Pandharpur. Anon, she joined the band of 'varkaris', with a 'vina' in her hand and the songs of Hari on her lips, and proceeded to Pandharpur, singing and dancing all the way in divine ecstasy.

On reaching the holy city of Pandharpur, she was in a state of divine felicity and beatitude. At the portal of the great temple, she was enraptured, and with a joyful face and sparkling eyes, she prostrated herself full length before the shrine. Then, with folded hands and tears flowing copiously from her eyes, she went inside the temple and addressed the Deity thus: 'Hearing the greatness of Your Name, I have come to You, surrendering my body, mind and soul to You, O Shri Vithala. You are generous, brave, beautiful, and perfect. You are One without a second. I am now completely dedicating myself to You, O Shri Vithala. Like Ajamila and Ganika whom You saved, I also seek refuge in You, O Shri Vithala. Abandoning all sensual desires and pride of body, abandoning all that I cherish, and abandoning all considerations of security, status, honour and pride of possession, I supplicate myself to Thee, O Shri Vithala. Please accept me.' Thus pleading, Kanhopatra placed her forehead at the Lord's feet. That was the beginning of her divine life with God. Throughout the rest of her life, Kanhopatra remained at Pandharpur, by the temple door of the holy shrine, singing songs with great reverence—and dancing—in praise of Shri Panduranga.

Kanhopatra's devotional exuberance now manifested itself in the beautiful songs she herself began to compose and sing in honour of Lord Panduranga. Her unbounded faith

(*shraddha*), love (*prema*), and devotion (*bhakti*) slowly purified her whole being. 'You have created me. Now you must reveal Yourself to me.' Such was her attitude. Taking refuge in Shri Krishna, she had already left it to Him to guide her through thick and thin. The spiritual person in her was now completely awakened.

Kanhopatra was quite young when she saw the pilgrims passing through her village and going to Pandharpur. She was attracted by the devotional songs of the devotees. Out of curiosity only she had asked whether she could also visit Pandharpur, and whether Panduranga would accept her. The devotees had taken her along nonetheless, and the journey to Pandharpur was just the beginning of her spiritual journey.

Shastras speak of the necessity of grace and guidance of a perfected guru. In fact, the guru takes over the whole responsibility of the disciple to lead him through. Taking refuge in such a person, the disciple practises the instructions prescribed for him and progresses slowly but surely in spiritual life.

How did Kanhopatra achieve the Supreme Goal? Did she have a guru?

One of her 'abhangas' (metrical compositions) tells us that she met Sant Jnaneshwara and it was he who initiated her. She sang: 'Today, Kanhopatra has earned everything! She has been blessed by meeting with Shri Jnaneshwara and thus has been graced by Him.'

Before coming to Pandharpur, the only accomplishments Kanhopatra had were those of a dancing girl. This was the only art she knew. So out of love and reverence she tried to amuse God and His devotees by her art of singing and dancing. She herself was the composer of the songs which she used to sing to the accompaniment of musical instruments. In one such song she sang: 'O Lord, my master, I have surrendered myself at Your lotus feet. I have

taken refuge in you. You are my protector, my friend, my master, my relative, my everything. Thou art friend and guide to the helpless and poor. Thou art compassionate and gracious to all. Fulfil Thy promise that Thou art the saviour and protector of the weak. O Lord Thou art the purifier of sins. Thou art Narayana Himself. Fulfil Thy promise that Thou art the saviour of thy devotees.'

'... I am downtrodden; you are my refuge. I am lowest of the lowly. I do not know the manners and customs of worship. My caste and birth are tainted. Driven by my nature, I do wrong. Please forgive me for my lapses. I do not claim a right for Thy revelation unto me but please, O Lord God, reveal Thyself to me as I am yours now.'

'...O Narayana, Thy love purifies all. By birth I am impure. I make many mistakes. I do not even repeat Thy Name. But I have taken refuge at Thy feet. Be gracious to be my protector and saviour...'

She now felt convinced that the chanting of God's name releases one from the bondage of birth and death. 'One should repeat constantly the name of God. His name wards off even Yama (the god of death), such is the potency and greatness of God's name. Repeating His name purifies even the evil men. Ajamila, Ganika, Valmiki and many others are examples of men who turned from evil to good.' She used to sing: 'Kanhopatra wears the garland of God's name and not Tulasi beads.' Her constant exhortation to one and all was to chant God's name with love, 'Pray to God with a longing heart. He will surely listen to your prayer if it is sincere'.

She became a child of God. Sometimes she addressed Him as Father sometimes as Mother. 'My father is very simple', she used to sing, 'He removes all afflictions of those who sincerely call on Him. Devotees are special objects of His love. He runs after

the devotees as the cow after the calf. By His kripa (grace), He removes all sufferings of His devotees. O my friend, try to taste the nectar of God's name'.

Kanhopatra thought that no yoga or tapas was necessary for her to know Him; bhakti alone was enough. She sang: 'If you do yoga or tapas, God runs away from you; if you meditate, He may not appear before you. But if you have bhakti and prema for Him, He runs after you.'

Out of intense love and devotion Kanhopatra sang: 'Of whom the Six Philosophies do not tire of talking, and still find Him indescribable, Kanhopatra got Him by love!... Knowledge, renunciation, even moksha, I do not crave for, but forsake me not, forget me not, this is all I ask for, O' Lord of Pandhari, my beloved Panduranga.'

'I have offered my body and mind at Your lotus feet. Do not, O beloved Panduranga, discriminate against me because of my low birth and upbringing. Among the devotees, there is no distinction of caste, learning, beauty, birth, riches or rituals. O Great Purifier, all are equally purified by thy name.'

'If a lion's cub is snatched and carried away by a fox, oh! shame unto the lion! I have surrendered myself at Your feet, my Lord; should I be carried away by evil persons, whose shame would it be?'

'You are my Shelter, my Refuge, O Shri Hari; You have to take care of me.' Through pure love and devotion, Kanhopatra finally achieved God realisation. She was blessed with the vision of her beloved Deity, Shri Vithala with all His attributes and form. We find a reference to this event in her song:

'Merits of my good deeds have fructified.
Today
I have been able to behold the lotus feet
of my
beloved Vithala! Blessed are my two eyes
who saw

Shri Vithala. Blessed am I that I trode
this path
of God realisation. Blessed is my
human birth
which enabled me to behold the
resplendent form of
Shri Hari today. Hail Shri Krishna!
Hail Vithala! Hail Panduranga.
I am not afraid of rebirth. Let me be
born again and again
Only to behold my beloved Vithala.'

As the fame of spiritual beauty of Kanhopatra spread far and wide, the dangers of her worldly life also increased. There were many people who failed to see the rising spiritual saint in Kanhopatra. Driven by lust and greed, they were only drawn to her transient physical beauty. Such evil persons think evil and act evil, even towards saintly beings. Their very nature and 'samskaras' propel them to villainy. One such evil person who saw Kanhopatra, went to the Moghul king of Bidar and told him that in Pandharpur there lived a prostitute by the main temple door whose beauty none could rival in this world.

Kanhopatra had done no evil to that man, yet guided by his own evil nature, he went and instigated the king against her.

The king despatched his soldiers to fetch Kanhopatra before him forthwith. When the soldiers arrived, Kanhopatra was singing God's praise with love and reverence at that time. The soldiers ordered her to leave with them to Bidar at once; and told her that if she refused, she will be taken thither by force. With the permission of the soldiers she went inside the temple to pay her obeisance to the Deity before setting out with them. The soldiers, meanwhile, waited outside.

There, inside the main shrine, with folded hands, with utmost humility, and with tears flowing down her cheeks, she prayed:

lives. Still, they placed before him God's 'prasada' which they had brought along with them from Pandharpur. The king accepted the 'Prasada' but noticed a hair sticking out of it, and questioned the priests the meaning of it.

The priests were confused and wondered what reply to give. Benumbed with terror they sputtered: 'The hair belongs to God Panduranga who is the advocate of Kanhopatra and who stands upon the brick on the banks of the Bhima, proclaiming to one and all:

'Yuga, yuga vari ubha vite...'

(From age to age, I am standing here on this brick to meet you only).

The king was sceptical. How come the Deity has hair? The explanation that Kanhopatra's soul merged with God ('Just as salt merges with sea-water') did not go well with him. So along with his retinue, he set out to Pandharpur to verify the facts for himself.

The priests were apprehensive on another score now. What if the king does not find hair upon the Deity's image? The priests pleaded piteously to the Lord to spare them

the disgrace and almost certain death that awaited them in such an eventuality. Throughout the return journey from Bidar to Pandharpur, the priests kept on invoking the Lord to save them from the ignominy and death. The sincere prayers of these woe-begone priests were heard by the Lord. When the king arrived at the temple and looked at the image of the Deity, lo and behold! he had a vision—a vision of Him Whom gods worship, and on Whom yogis contemplate.

The king was overwhelmed with joy. He embraced the Deity's image. He had seen the Lord's Form in the manner as described to him by the priests. He was now repentant for the ill-treatment meted out to the priests, and for driving Kanhopatra to such an extreme end. 'Blessed is Kanhopatra to have merged with the essential form of the Lord Whose vision I had today', said the king. There afterwards, he went and saw the 'tarati' tree also. After honouring the priests, the king then returned to his palace in Bidar, blessed by the vision of the Lord, through the dedication and sacrifice of a true devotee of Krishna, Kanhopatra.

If you fill an earthen vessel with water and put it away upon a shelf, the water in it dries up within a few days; but its contents would have suffered no diminution if it was kept immersed in water. Even so is the case with man's love for the Lord. If you fill and enrich your heart for a time with the love of God and then taking it away from Him, give it to other things, you will very soon discover that it has lost the priceless jewel and become poor indeed.

So long as it is on the fire, the milk boils and bubbles. Remove the fire and it is quiet again. So the heart of the neophyte boils with enthusiasm while he goes on with his spiritual exercises, but it soon cools down again without them.

—*Shri Ramakrishna*

Arise! awake! and stop not till the goal is reached! Katha Upa. I. iii. 14

Vol. IV.

AUGUST-1899

No. 37

NANA KATHA:

* * * *

A correspondent writes to the Madras Hindu. "On Sunday morning the pier was crowded with an eager throng of spectators anxious to see Swami Vivekananda, who was on his way to England by the S. S. Golconda. But to their great disappointment they were told that the vessel having arrived from Calcutta, an infected port, was under quarantine, and that the Swami would not be allowed to land. The numerous people who had gathered together, of all ranks and ages, had therefore to go away considerably vexed.

Some there were who were determined to have a glimpse at least of the Swami, and with that view they went in boats alongside the vessel, from whose deck the Swami was accorded a distant but cheerful welcome by his friends and admirers. Some days ago, a public meeting was held at Castle Kernan under the presidency of the Hon'ble Mr. U. Ananda Charlu, when it was resolved to address Government praying that Swami Vivekananda be permitted to land at Madras and stop there for a few hours before embarking again. Message after message was despatched to the Blue Heights, but the Swami's friends and admirers got some vague replies, but no sanction was wired to the Port Health Officer and the result was that the Health Officer would not allow him to land.

* * * *

It is said, however, that the Captain of the vessel was permitted to come ashore, and that he was seen in several parts of the city. If this is true, I would like to know if the Captain had

undergone, any singular process of immunization from infecting other people. It is hoped Government would call for a report from the Port Surgeon as to why the Captain was allowed to go about the town and under whose authority."

* * * *

Swami Vivekananda for whose reception grand preparations were made at Madras, could not leave his steamer, without suffering a quarantine of 24 hours. He is accompanied by Miss Noble (Sister Nivedita as she is called) and Swami Turiyananda. We are glad Swami Turiyananda has left for England. He is a highly cultured spiritually developed Sannyasi and a man of extensive experience of India having walked over almost the whole of Upper India. A man well versed in Vedanta philosophy, possessing keen sense of observation, a good speaker and writer, he will make his own mark, if not on the platform, at least in creating a large number of disciples to gather round him. In 1896 Swami Turiyananda was for some months in Lucknow; those who were brought in contact with him were struck with his intelligence and keen sense of observation. He will prove a power of strength to his brother in faith, the Swami Vivekananda.—Advocate.

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The following lines are culled from a private letter:—"In spite of silly Plague Regulations the permit to land which was refused Swamiji at Madras, was granted at Colombo, and much hospitality was shewn by many kind friends. In the evening there was quite a demonstration in one house, and the adjoining street, and the shout of praise to Shiva nearly deafened one. In spite of European clothes he was their Avatar and you could see by their dear faces that knew it."